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THE
MONTH

NOVEMBER 1959

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ST. BEDE

By

DONALD NICHOLL

MANY SAINTS, from the moment of their conception, are the occasions of pious prophecy and miraculous visions; for the rest of their lives they are the subjects of spectacular graces and astonishing intuitions. Their writings and sayings are organised into systematic guide-books to the heights of spirituality, and their treasured relics become the means of wonderful cures, dramatic conversions and terrible punishments. None of these things happened to St. Bede. No fuss seems to have been made of his birth; even his parents' names are unrecorded. We are not told of his being favoured by visions; nor did he work miracles—though it is, perhaps, typical of him that he should be the beneficiary of one which he mentions casually, almost shyly.¹ After his death no cult of him swept the country; not until 1899, in fact, some twelve hundred years afterwards, did the Church officially recognise him and grant him the title of doctor. On the face of it, Bede is not the most promising subject for study in a series on the mystical tradition.

Yet one wonders how many of the older saints are so likely as Bede to make spiritual life intelligible to men of our day, for his is the spirituality of the technician; the man who serves his apprenticeship quietly, steadily and conscientiously mastering the necessary skills and only revealing his consummate achievement in the last decade of his life. Our contemporaries who are rightly sceptical of short-cuts to wisdom and look doubtfully on youthful lyricism might well be reassured as they glance at the titles of Bede's early works: *De arte metrica*, *De orthographia*, *De schematibus et tropis*, etc. Like a craftsman bending over his last, Bede applies himself assiduously to the dry details of learning, to getting his quantities right and mastering his references. With each fresh treatise he perfects the chief tool of his trade, his

¹ *Vita sancti Cuthberti* (ed. W. Jaeger, Leipzig, 1935), p. 57.

Latin prose style, which becomes ever more exact. As he frees his Latin prose from all those superfluities and adornments upon which his contemporaries prided themselves, so when incorporating the work of other men into his own he cuts out all irrelevant material and goes straight to the nerve of the subject. As a result the story of his spiritual growth does not tell of how a youthful vision had to be clung to despite the dark clouds which came with the realities of experience; on the contrary, the darkness and incomprehension are dispelled with the years, so that the note of youthful joy grows stronger, his mind moves with increasing ease and flexibility, until at the last he can say: "It is time for me, if it be His will, to return to my Maker, who formed me, when as yet I was not, out of nothing. I have lived long, and my merciful Judge has well disposed my life. The time of my departure is at hand, for my soul desires to see Christ my King in His beauty."¹

There is an economy in these dying words of Bede that befits the manner of his living. Only a boy of seven when he was entrusted to the monastery of Wearmouth, he spent the next fifty-five years until the day of his death (25 May, 735) either there or in the house at Jarrow. Fifty-five years of monastic duty, the office, manual work and teaching, a routine scarcely ever broken. There was the journey he made once to Lindisfarne and, not long before his death, the journey to York. Otherwise he worked away unceasingly at his scientific treatises, his hagiographies, biblical commentaries and the *Historia Ecclesiastica*. It is upon the latter, quite rightly, that Bede's fame is based, for it is in the proper sense of the term an epoch-making study of history. But one feels that Bede would be pleased if at least one or two of the thousands who read his history would turn sometimes to the "mystical" aspect of his teaching—to what he himself regarded as of highest importance.

However there is a sense in which it is misguided, and even in a measure an offence to the memory of Bede, to speak of *his* mystical teaching at all. For though he was a teacher he was at every instant conscious of being a Catholic teacher, whose duty it is to come ever closer to the mind of the Catholic Church: whoever wishes to be united to God must first become united

¹ The eye-witness was Cuthbert, afterwards Abbot of Wearmouth and Jarrow, cf. *Bædæ Opera Historica* (ed. C. Plummer), p. lxxvii.

with the Church, learn its faith and be imbued with its sacraments.¹ Then when a person, in fear and trembling, assumes the office of teacher and begins to announce Catholic truth to the unlearned, he must above all things avoid giving to that teaching some special interpretation of his own—that would be to ape the pagan oracles.² It is, in fact, this habit of sullyng the purity of Scripture with human fictions that made heretics so detestable to Bede:³ for him, heretics are the little foxes referred to in the *Song of Songs* who destroy the vines, that is, who lacerate the simple minds of faithful Catholics; it is the duty of Catholic teachers to seize them before they can do much damage.⁴ His burning zeal for the purity of the Catholic faith accounts for the one outburst of real anger from this usually serene man, on the occasion of his own orthodoxy being called in question by the “babbler” David.⁵ And for the same reason it is most inaccurate to cite him, as frequently happens, as a representative of “Benedictine spirituality” for there is not the remotest suggestion in his writings that he recognised any schools of spirituality—the very notion would smack to him of conventicles rather than of the Church.⁶

Of course, all Catholic teachers bring out fresh treasures from the inexhaustible stock of Catholic wisdom, according to their own times and their own temperament, but if one is not to confuse the proportions completely and be unfaithful to Bede, one must stress that the main body of his writings consists of a conscientious repetition of basic Biblical texts and the standard comments of the fathers. Rarely does he venture an opinion of his own; his was not a brilliant, original, speculative mind—the theology of the Incarnation, for example, or of the Trinity, receives no exciting development at his hands—and his own attitude is frequently only to be inferred from the way he treats his authorities. When one finds, for instance, that he omits from his rendering of Adamnan’s *De locis sanctis* the disgusting story of the Jew who threw an ikon of Our Lady into the

¹ *Opera* 12 (ed. Giles), p. 271.

² *Opera* 7, p. 244.

³ *Opera* 12, p. 267.

⁴ *Opera* 9, p. 247.

⁵ *Beda Opera de Temporibus* (ed. C. W. Jones, 1943), pp. 132–5. Jones points out that Bede is here criticising St. Wilfrid, also, in whose presence the accusation was made without rebuff.

⁶ St. Benedict himself is scarcely ever referred to by Bede.

privity, one can infer something about Bede's temperament. His omission of the story is the silence of a fastidious spirit. But such aspects of his temperament are usually to be inferred rather than demonstrated.

Fortunately we do not depend upon inference to realise that it was Bede's close attachment to tradition that led him to the Scriptures as the beginning and end of a Catholic's spiritual life, for he says as much quite plainly. How, he asks, can anyone boast of being a Christian who does not, to the limit of his capacity, devote himself to study of the Scriptures in search of Christ?¹ The very first thing a Christian must do, if he wishes to arrive at contemplation of the divine majesty, is to seek strength from those two breasts of the Church, the Old and the New Testaments.² Everything he receives there will be a source to him of peace and charity,³ for the will of God is our peace and only in sacred Scripture can we be sure at all times of discovering God's will.⁴ At the same time let no one imagine that he can arrive at an understanding of the Scriptures if he reads them hastily and negligently—Bede has severe things to say of gifted men who harbour this illusion—they must be studied constantly and diligently.⁵

So faithful was Bede to his own advice, so close was he to the Scriptures, that it would be inadequate to speak of him interpreting the world in the light of them; it would even be inadequate to describe the Scriptures as the spectacles through which he saw the world, and nearer to the truth to say that Scriptures were the eyes with which he beheld it. And if one wishes at a glance to see that world for oneself one can scarcely do better than to look long at the illuminated pages of the Lindisfarne Gospels, the gospels produced by the community at Lindisfarne which Bede himself visited, for which he wrote his life of St. Cuthbert and which, in return, inscribed his name in its Book of Life. The words "*In principio erat verbum*," for instance, are seen when they appear in the Lindisfarne Gospels to contain depths of meaning which they are not seen to contain when they appear in the clipped, efficient form of modern type, devoid of any penumbra of suggestion. Within the initials one finds trumpet

¹ *Opera* 11, p. 380.

² *Opera* 12, p. 212.

³ *Opera* 8, p. 326.

⁴ *Opera* 8, p. 27.

⁵ *Opera* 11, pp. 68–9, and 9, p. 254.

patterns, whorls, triangles and lozenges, and birds and animals interlaced, as though foreshadowing the whole wealth of forms and life that was to issue from the Word; and this whole microcosm is highlighted by the interplay of colours used for the illumination, green, mauve, yellow, red and pink. In a similar fashion the world revealed by Scripture was for Bede full of many layers of meaning, literal, allegorical and tropological. And just as the purpose of the illumination was to ensure the greatest impact of the words upon the eye and mind of the reader so the purpose of biblical study, for Bede, was to allow the interior, or mystical, meaning of Scripture to make its full impact upon the heart of the devout reader.

The images used by Bede to characterise the relationship between the literal and the spiritual¹ meanings of Scripture are remarkable; the literal is a veil which has to be drawn aside to reveal the spiritual sense;² it is the bark one must strip off to come to the pith;³ it is the shadow of the allegorical truth.⁴ When one translates the literal sense into the spiritual it is like the change of water into wine,⁵ like rolling the stone away from our uncomprehending hearts.⁶ Or again:

A honeycomb is wax containing honey; but the honey in the wax is the spiritual sense of the divine words in the letter, which is properly described as a dripping honeycomb. The honeycomb is dripping indeed since it has more honey than its waxen cells can contain; for such is the fecundity of the sacred Scriptures that a verse which is usually written down in one short line would fill many pages if one examined it more closely and tried to bring out how much sweetness of spiritual understanding it contains within. Let us give an example:—the psalmist says, Praise the Lord, Jerusalem. In the literal sense, the psalmist is urging the citizens of that city, in which stands the temple of God, to sing the Lord's praises. In the allegorical sense, Jerusalem, the Church of Christ, is spread throughout the whole world. Tropologically, that is, according to the moral sense, each holy soul is rightly named Jerusalem. Anagogically, that is, as signifying the highest

¹ For the sake of brevity I might say quite baldly that I do not think that one can *literally* maintain that Bede was consistent in his use of the terms, mystical, allegorical, anagogical, etc.; but the *spirit* of the distinctions is clear enough.

² *Opera* 7, p. 108.

³ *Opera* 8, p. 360.

⁴ *Opera* 8, p. 153.

⁵ *Opera* 9, p. 13.

⁶ *Opera homiletica et rhythmica* (1955), p. 247–8.

things, Jerusalem is the habitation of the heavenly kingdom, which consists of holy angels and men.¹

From these examples the danger of Bede's approach is obvious: that just as the wealth of colours and patterns in the illuminated initials of the Lindisfarne Gospels may distract the eye from the words themselves, so Bede's zeal for the spiritual sense may deflect our attention from the literal meaning. Indeed, his references to the literal meaning are almost slighting² and as a result he sometimes denatures an event of scriptural history. The story of Christ raising Jairus' daughter, for instance, he takes as an allegory of the fate of the synagogue represented by Jairus, the leader of the synagogue; and not once throughout his commentary on this incident does he betray any sense of the time and place of the incident, of the anguish in Jairus' heart, the sickening delay in getting to his home and, finally, the tender solicitude of Christ over the girl, telling her parents to give her food.³ The personalities of the drama, and the drama itself, melt into the moulds of allegorical types.

This by no means isolated example of Bede's manipulation of the literal sense⁴ is the kind of scriptural exegesis which makes modern scholars dismiss his allegorising as a quaint aberration he shared with his age. But to shrug off such a large proportion of Bede's work in this way is to fail to grasp that for Bede the Scriptures are primarily the means of spiritual edification rather than a field for historical expertise. The latter should not be neglected, certainly, but it remains secondary. Convinced that all the Scriptures, even the names and locations of places that occur there, abound with spiritual significance,⁵ Bede impressed the names and places, numbers, colours and shapes of Scripture so deeply upon his heart that his heart itself became Holy Land, filled with the spiritual significance of the places and events that occurred there. It has been pointed out that the word "sacrament" is a favourite word with Bede in this connection, and that for him it means, not "the outward and visible signs of an inward and spiritual grace," but rather the inner and spiritual meaning

¹ *Opera* 9, p. 283.

² In addition to the references already given cf. *Opera* 9, p. 242 and p. 365.

³ *Opera* 11, pp. 81-9.

⁴ Cf. *Opera* 11, p. 186.

⁵ *Retractatio in Actus Apostolorum* (ed. Laistner, 1939), p. 125.

of an external fact, or narrative, or name.¹ Consequently Bede traces out upon the hearts of his readers a kind of spiritual geography derived from the geography of the Holy Land: Ephra, Beth-horon and Seboim, for instance, the three vulnerable points of the Israelite position attacked by the three companies of the Philistines are the concupiscent, wrathful and rational areas of man respectively;² again, the building of the temple of Solomon³ is the external event corresponding to the transformation of the soul into the temple of God, and the four-square stones of the temple, the measurements of it, the kind of wood used for the beams, the decoration with gold and silver, the vestments of gold and violet and purple and scarlet twice dyed,⁴ all this wealth of form, number and colour has its corresponding inner and spiritual meaning. Or, as he puts it in another passage:

If our conscience, once it is purified of its vices, rejoices in having God dwelling there, then it is truly to be called Jerusalem. What are the gates of this Jerusalem except the senses of our body, that is, sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch? . . . These on the Sabbath day we are ordered to shut so that we may take our leisure with God, occupying ourselves in psalms and prayers.⁵

But nowhere does the "wondrous sacramental concord"⁶ of nature and history achieved by Bede's allegorical method strike such an immediately authentic note as in that chapter of his *Reckoning of Time* which he devotes to the typical or mystical significance of Easter time.⁷ Coming at the end of a long scientific work, of great technical complexity, this chapter fuses the external and internal into one so that we see at a glance what Bede on another occasion described as "the fair harmony of things."⁸ For the events of Easter time in the heavens and upon earth

¹ Plummer in *Baedae Opera Historica*, pp. lvi-lvii.

² *Opera* 8, p. 49.

³ *Opera* 8, pp. 262-9.

⁴ *Opera* 7, pp. 324-5. From his commentary on the tabernacle.

⁵ *Opera* 9, pp. 50-1.

⁶ *Opera* 11, p. 21.

⁷ *Opera de Temporibus* (ed. Jones), pp. 286-90. This chapter is described by Levison (*Bede, His Life, Times and Writings*, ed. Hamilton Thompson 1935, p. 122) as "sublime devotion." It should certainly be studied by all who wish to understand why the Easter controversy raised such strong passions in the seventh century.

⁸ The translation is Plummer's (*Opera Historica*, p. lxi.)

bespeak the Easter mysteries enacted once in the Holy Land and re-enacted each year by the Church in her Easter rites. We have the token for entering upon the Easter ritual when the spring equinox assures us that God's Son has opened up for man the paths of light and destroyed the powers of darkness, as the sun itself gains the victory over the shadows of night. This is the first month of the year's cycle, the same month in which the world was created¹ and in which man was set in Paradise; the same month in which man who has strayed from Paradise is made anew—for now the Lord makes all things new. Thus the great sacrament of Easter is celebrated at every level of Creation, in the mounting power of the sun, reflected by the waxing moon, in the renewal of vegetation on the face of the earth, and in the renewal of life within the souls of the faithful, that is, in the Church. This is already a participation in the great Eighth Day of the world when the souls of the just will enter into that eternal rest won for them by Christ their King, whom they now behold in His beauty.

There we have the climax of man's spiritual life envisaged by Bede. Inevitably the question arises, are these heights of mystical perception within the reach of everyone, or only of a few? Certainly Bede held that only a few are capable in this life of penetrating into the secrets of heavenly contemplation, and he issues a warning to those who have not achieved consummate virtue at the human level: they should not presume to meddle in divine things lest they come to harm, falling into heresy, for instance, or into despair.² But the context of the warning makes it quite clear that it was to those who wish to know God's particular secrets that his warning applies and not to those who seek the normal means of perfection. In fact there is not the slightest trace in Bede of spiritual snobbism, of any suggestion that there is a special way of spirituality for a few specially gifted people; the categories of fragmented individualism underlying such an assumption are totally foreign to him. So intimately shot together are all members of the Church that it is virtually impossible to say when the virtue of one begins and the virtue of another ends. Each of us is in the same position as a stone in

¹ Cf. *Opera* 7, p. 13, "It is clear from these words of God that it was in spring-time that the adornment of the world was perfected."

² *Opera* 7, pp. 419-20.

the building of the temple, resting on some and supporting others.¹ Even those who are least polished (are, indeed, rather insensitive and mule-like)² have their part in furthering the work of edification and redemption when they humbly and patiently offer their shoulders to bear the burden of fraternal charity.

It is true, of course, that Bede holds to traditional teaching on status, and that the orders of the married, the continent and the virgins are to be placed in an ascending order of dignity;³ it is also true that there is a select group of men who achieve such perfection in the active life, and the virtues it demands, that they are granted the grace of divine vision.⁴ But of this latter grace, as of what are usually termed "mystical experiences," Bede has little or nothing to say.⁵ And considering the monastic audience he was usually addressing it is notable how rarely he alludes to the special privileges of the monastic status, whereas he is constantly reminding them of the part which the simple faithful, the laity, have to play in the Church. They are all aware, he remarks, how many people of lay status are leading lives of outstanding virtue whilst many dedicated from childhood to the religious life are seen to have fallen into sloth. Again, he says, all the faithful are truly priests,⁶ and in a heart-warming sermon preached on the Nativity of Our Lord he speaks of how the title of pastor is not confined to bishops, priests and deacons or rulers of monasteries but is rightly applied to all the faithful who keep watch over their tiny homes.⁷ Such a delicate sense of the sanctity of everyday duties was rare amongst Bede's contemporaries and rarer still was the ability to express it as he did: "We must aim, then, by good living to hasten to behold the face of our Creator in such a way that we never in any wise desert our neighbour who is running along with us, but let us

¹ *Opera* 8, p. 289.

² *Opera* 8, p. 379.

³ *Opera* 11, pp. 66-7. In the same commentary (p. 257) he cites Job as the type of married goodness.

⁴ *Opera* 7, p. 229. From the context it seems that Bede considers this grace to be limited to certain prophets and patriarchs.

⁵ Except, of course, in his hagiographical writings where he is simply following his authorities.

⁶ *Opera* 7, pp. 365-6; 10, p. 37.

⁷ *Opera homiletica et rhythmica*, p. 49.

take care to appear before the face of the Lord all together with him."¹

No one, therefore, whatever his status or however limited his talents, need fear that Bede's spiritual teaching is too rarefied for him. Indeed the diffident especially might find in him the ideal teacher. To begin with, he is always ready with a word of encouragement: he assures us, for instance, that we need not despair if, through ignorance and weakness, we fail to achieve the good we aim at, so long as our actions are rooted in good will.² Similarly with the involuntary thoughts which distract our minds; they are to be treated as a nuisance, like flies that keep on buzzing around one, but we can take comfort from the fact that though they take the edge off our vision they do not blind us.³ We must bear in mind, moreover, as Bede is never tired of reminding us, that growth in the spiritual life is not sudden; it is a slow growth, like that of a young tree;⁴ also like a young tree, it is a tender thing, with most of its strength underground in the darkness, hence we must hesitate before revealing our spiritual aspirations lest the tender shoots become corrupted and wither.⁵ At the same time we must be sensitive to every touch of grace and ready to respond at the crucial moments of growth.⁶ And it is absolutely essential to root all our spiritual aspirations in *hope*⁷—the unshakable hope that we shall achieve our desires with the help of God. There is nothing more execrable than lack of hope, for without it our courage in the fight of faith is completely sapped away.⁸

The importance that Bede attaches to hope needs to be insisted upon because it explains a feature of his writings that has puzzled, and even shocked, some scholars: the severity with which he condemns Pelagianism. But this is not surprising, even in so tranquil a soul as Bede, when we recognise that Pelagianism, with its teaching that man of his own goodness can do good, drives

¹ *Opera* 7, p. 273. It may intrigue the reader to learn that this exhortation occurs in Bede's comment upon Exodus XXVI, 5: "Every curtain shall have fifty loops on both sides, so set on, that one loop may be set against another loop, and one may be fitted to the other."

² *Opera homiletica et rhythmica*, p. 45.

⁴ *Opera* 10, p. 141; 11, p. 188.

⁶ *Opera* 7, p. 195.

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 144. I should point out that these last five notes represent a sharp telescoping of Bede's observations.

³ *Ibid*, p. 266.

⁵ *Opera* 8, pp. 51-2.

⁷ *Opera* 9, p. 1.

men to despair. When they find out that unaided they do evil, instead of throwing themselves upon divine grace, they tend to give up hope. Scholars are agreed that the Pelagian controversy was a live one in the England of Bede but have tended to speak of it as though it affected only the men of learning; Bede's vehemence against Pelagius and his joy over those of the faithful who were brought back from "heresy and despair" suggest that it may even have been an immediate pastoral issue. The hope of men hung upon it.

We have now shown how even the humblest of men have their role in the common work of building the temple and seen how dependent each one is upon the other even for doing his own work. It remains to describe the means that the individual must adopt, according to Bede, if he is to be made perfect. It goes without saying that he constantly recalls us to the central Catholic teaching that to be perfect means to love God and one's neighbour—love of one's neighbour coming first in the order of time, and love of God being prior in dignity. It also goes without saying that the traditional teaching on asceticism is repeated over and over again: prayer, fasting, vigils are indispensable aids to spiritual growth. All this is common to the tradition that Bede absorbed so thoroughly, and has to be taken as read. But a striking feature of his teaching which gives it a peculiar nuance—and a very English one at that—is the emphasis he lays upon practical moral behaviour as a means of purification.¹ And amongst these injunctions of practical morality there are three which recur so persistently in Bede's writings that they give his spiritual teaching a character of its own; these are, the need to control one's tongue, the need for mutual correction amongst the faithful, and the need to give alms.

Presumably as a result of living for so many years in a monastic community Bede had come to realise vividly that the tongue is the greatest source of discord² in the human community. From

¹ An instructive comparison may be found in the commentaries upon the *Song of Songs* which Bede and St. Bernard composed. St. Bernard's is "mystical" in a later sense of the word than that familiar to Bede: he delves into the recesses of the individual's psychology with truly poetic intuition. Bede's commentary is "mystical" in his own sense, as signifying interior, but it is the interiority of moral behaviour rather than of psychological experience.

² Cf. *Opera* 9, pp. 83–4, on the grave crime of sowing discord by which "unity and fraternity, which is welded together by the grace of the Holy Spirit, is dissipated."

the use of the tongue for purposes of detraction almost the whole human race lies in danger;¹ so we should bear detraction patiently and try not to provoke those who malign us,² because the tongue is a fire, and the abuse of it can burn down the carefully planted woods of virtue—its corrosive effects are to be felt in almost all aspects of human behaviour.³ We should not, for instance, quickly start talking after a time of prayer since that is to dissipate the fruits of our devotion,⁴ and such promiscuity is destructive of chastity—a virtue of the tongue no less than it is of the body.⁵ How strongly Bede felt that the control of the tongue is a *sine qua non* of purity may be sensed not only from the number of occasions when he cites “idle words” as illustrating aspects of sinful behaviour—and the number is enormous—but also from the fact he even speaks approvingly of a pagan philosophical discipline in this regard. This was the Pythagorean practice of making the master’s disciples keep silence for five years.

But there is a time to keep silent and a time to speak out, as Bede notes, and the time to speak out is when we see one of our brethren committing sin. For a person who holds his tongue when he sees one of his brethren sinning is no less a sinner than the man who refuses forgiveness to a penitent sinner. In fact, failing to correct and refusing to forgive are but two sides of the same coin, since a person cannot be forgiven until he has been corrected and is penitent. Similarly forgiveness should not be indiscriminately accorded, but only when the sinner is ready to do penance.⁶ Bede himself, as we have seen, demanded public restitution of his own good Catholic name from his detractor David, nor did he hesitate to demand that his own diocesan bishop, Wilfrid, should join in the restitution since he had tacitly shared in the detraction,⁷ Bede’s action is totally misunderstood, moreover, unless it is seen as arising from his charity towards the two transgressors, because the duty of correction is not one that he allowed to be undertaken lightly. Above all we must make sure that we do not undertake it out of hatred—which is so much more deadly than, for instance, anger: anger may be a motive for genuinely wanting to correct a person but

¹ *Opera* 9, p. 146.

² *Opera* 12, p. 326.

³ *Opera* 12, pp. 182–3.

⁴ *Opera* 7, p. 358.

⁵ *Opera* 10, p. 341.

⁶ *Opera* 11, p. 239.

⁷ Cf. p. 255 of this article.

hatred never can be. Again, before pointing out some fault in one of our brethren, we should examine ourselves to discover if we ourselves have never been guilty of the same fault: if we never have, then let us reflect that we also are men, and might well have been guilty in that way.¹

What a magnificent corrector Bede must have been, with his quiet penetration into human self-deceit. Equally penetrating and bold are his observations on the third of the practical issues which we have claimed as characteristic of his teaching, that is, the need for alms-giving. And the boldest of these observations are to be found in his commentary on Nehemias, where the extortion wreaked upon the poor by their governors gives Bede the opportunity to tell the secular and ecclesiastical leaders of his own day² some uncomfortable home-truths. Here he is even prepared to abandon his beloved allegorising entirely and insist that Nehemias' threats against the rich for oppressing the poor are to be taken quite literally: anyone who makes exactions of the poor in their time of distress will be shaken out of the lap of God: even our just claims at such a time must be waived if we ourselves wish our Father to forgive us our debts.³ Once more he is prepared to insist upon the literal meaning, a little later in the same commentary, when he tells his monastic readers that they must make sure on feast days of putting aside some portion of their food to be given to the poor and to pilgrims.⁴ For nothing is more apt than generous alms-giving to cure a person of spiritual aridity and sterility.⁵ And unless a man stretches out his hand to give to the needy it is in vain for him to stretch out his hands to God in search of forgiveness for his sins.⁶

This image of the hands stretched forth, giving and forgiving, may well stand in our minds as typical of Bede's spiritual teaching, bringing home to us how all events in this world—even the humble movement of the hands—are charged with intimations

¹ *Opera* II, pp. 30–I.

² The commentary was written between 725 and 730, a period when Bede's discontent at the condition of Northumbria was mounting.

³ *Opera* 9, p. 22.

⁴ *Opera* 9, p. 29.

⁵ How reminiscent are Bede's words of the advice on this very subject given by Gerard Hopkins to Robert Bridges in his letter of 19 January, 1879: "It changes the whole man, if anything can; not his mind only but the will and everything."

⁶ *Opera* II, p. 7.

of that divine order wherein "all things are double one against another."¹ Bede did not have the quick fluency of some other saints in speculating about the secrets of that order, but he did know what contribution to it was demanded of his particular talents. It was, for the most part, a craftsman's contribution of regular attendance upon the everyday moral demands of the work. He knew that his own hands were but a shadow of the divine craftsman's hands—for God is the ultimate craftsman.²

THE FOLK CAROL

By

DOUGLAS BRICE

ETYMOLOGICALLY the word "carol" signifies a ring dance. Scholars maintain that it is derived through the old French "caroler" and the Latin "choraula" from the Greek "choraules," meaning a flute player for chorus dancing, and eventually from "choros," meaning a dance performed in a circle. The carol was therefore originally a danced song and intended for use out of doors.³ It is interesting to observe that John Stephen has recently shown quite a number of fifteenth-century polyphonic carols such as "This Endris Night" to have been originally intended for processional use, which would seem to imply that they accompanied a liturgical dance.⁴

¹ Cf. Plummer (*Opera Historica*), p. lxi.

² *Opera* 10, pp. 83-4.

³ There is the less common type of folk-carol, which in addition to being a danced song also took the form of a parlour game. Perhaps the best known example of this species is "The Twelve Days of Christmas" which accompanied a game of forfeits. "The Green Grass grew all round" is one other such example that might be quoted. It took the form of a memory test. As each competitor was called upon in succession to play his part, all the items previously mentioned had to be recapitulated. Lapses of memory were consequently very frequent, and a forfeit would be demanded of the player who failed to give the objects in their correct order.

⁴ Cf. *Musica Britannica*, 1952.

But what exactly is a carol? How would we define it? We all know that "While Shepherds Watched" is a hymn, that "Here we come a-wassailing" is a quète song, that "Good King Wenceslas" is a modern ballad, but what is a carol? To some, such a question would appear a waste of words—"We can tell a carol at first hearing as easily as telling a rose by its scent," would be the reply. The question is not so easily answered. Percy Scholes defines a carol as "a religious seasonal song of joyful character in the vernacular, and sung by the common people." Dr. Greene, however, has his own ideas on the subject and gives the definition as "a song on any subject, composed of uniform stanzas and provided with a burden."¹ Moreover he follows up his definition by distinguishing between a "burden" and a "refrain." A "burden," he claims, is a completely independent verse, alternating with the stanzas and sung as a chorus. It is "a self-contained formal and metrical unit," and it is this that "makes and marks the carol." Examples such as "The Holly and the Ivy," "A Virgin Unspotted," and "In Bethlehem City" would therefore according to the definition qualify as carols. On the other hand, the popular favourite, "I Saw Three Ships," would not, for the chorus, "On Christmas Day in the morning," is not a "burden" but a "refrain interlarded between the lines of the stanza of which it is an integral part." However, Dr. Greene limits his definition to medieval carols up to 1550, and so this last example falls just outside his definition. But if we accept the "burden" as an essential ingredient of the carol, then immediately certain of our hymns, as, for instance, the "Adeste Fideles,"² and "Hark! the Herald Angels Sing," qualify as carols, but on the other hand "Christians Awake" and "O Little Town of Bethlehem," must be relegated to the parish hymnal. Perhaps the definition most widely accepted among scholars is that of Percy Dearmer: "Carols are songs with a religious impulse that are simple, hilarious, popular and modern." Here the basic idea embraces all carols of all times.

¹ *The Early English Carol*, 1935, Preface, p. xxiii.

² Dom John Stephan, O.S.B., "*The Adeste Fideles*," *A Study on its Origin and Development*, p. 22. In this treatise first published in 1947 the author has demonstrated that the composer of both text and music of the "Adeste Fideles" was John Francis Wade (d. 1786), teacher of Latin and copyist at Douay College, where it was first sung.

The carol is always characterised by a definite type of ingredient. There are the familiar references to holly and ivy, mistletoe and laurel, candles and cake, and other oddments that have survived from pagan ritual of ancient times. A charming ingredient is the pastoral element, particularly in Italy, where every year at Christmas time the shepherds come down from the hill country about Naples, and gathering round the crib play their bagpipe music of the kind Handel has preserved for us in his Pastoral Symphony. But it is the apocryphal element first introduced into carol literature by the Franciscan friars that has inspired some of our finest carols, such as "The Bitter Withy," "King Herod and the Cock," "The Miraculous Harvest," "The Cherry Tree Carol," and the forever popular "I Saw Three Ships." This last named tells of how the three ships bore the skulls of the Magi from Bethlehem to Cologne, a fable suggested by the Emperor Barbarossa's gift to Cologne cathedral in 1162. At some time or other the Holy Family was substituted for these relics, but as recently as 1895 a boatman on the Humber was heard singing a version in which the three "crowns" were on board.¹

A most interesting example of apocryphal legend is to be found in "The Cherry Tree Carol." The story is from the apocryphal Gospel of the Pseudo-Matthew, and tells how during the flight into Egypt, Joseph, Mary and her Divine Offspring stopped and rested under the shade of a palm tree. When Mary asks Joseph to reach for some of the fruit, Joseph becomes annoyed and testily replies that there are more important things to attend to, and that the water is already very low in the bottles. Whereupon Jesus speaks, and immediately the tree bows down its branches to enable Mary to gather the fruit she requires. Joseph is immediately filled with remorse for his misconduct and humbly asks Mary's forgiveness. The story has many versions, but throughout them all Joseph is represented by the Humanist composers as being, in spite of his noble calling, very human. In the East he is represented as an old man with a beard, generally very tired and sleepy. In England he is depicted as old and inconsiderate as in the version found in Sandys collection of 1833. In the French noëls he appears as a normal human being:

¹ Article: A Definition of a Carol. *The Times Library*, 21 December 1954.

Saint Joseph dites le nous
Quels sentiments eûtes vous
Quand vous vîtes la grossesse
De la divine Princesse?
N'en fûtes vous points jaloux?¹

In the Coventry Mystery Play, "cherry tree" is substituted for "palm tree," and the episode occurs before the birth of Christ in the course of the journey to Bethlehem to conform to the decree of Caesar. But the finest tune of all is that which found its way to America and was reclaimed by Cecil Sharp in 1917. Here Joseph is represented as a young man courting the Queen of Galilee, and taking Mary on his left knee inquires when the Child's birthday will be. The reply follows the Eastern tradition as to the date of Christmas, and the babe makes answer:

On the fifth day of January
My birthday will be
When the stars and the elements
Doth tremble with fear.²

A right understanding of the ballad is essential when discussing the folk carol. The word "ballad" is derived from the Latin and means a dance. It was performed in a circle, and was not only, with the rondeau and virilai, one of the most fashionable forms of entertainment but a dance of singular charm and grace. As a rule it was composed in common measure with a verse repeating form, but by Shakespeare's time the dance and the refrain had disappeared altogether and the ballad became known merely as a song for solo voice. Strictly speaking, however, the ballad was a dance, and although in the first instance the work of a single composer, it was of communal origin and began with the dramatic singing of a throng of people under a leader. The leader or soloist led the ring dance, singing at the same time certain phrases or additaments to which the people replied in the form of a refrain. The ballad poem was always narrative in form and dealt with the historical, the heroic, or the sentimental, with an unsophisticated simplicity and unselfconsciousness that one finds

¹ Article: The Cherry Tree Carol. *The Times* Library, 23 December 1955.

² Idem.

only in simple-minded communities where the members, by reason of circumstances, are the sole source of their recreation and amusement. With its first public performance the ballad was taken up and passed from mouth to mouth, from hamlet to hamlet, like a piece of gossip, producing variants till the most interesting example survived. It is more than probable that no two ballad singers ever sang the same ballad alike, and in this way each locality came to possess its own version of the original melody.

Although the ballad made its first appearance in the eleventh century among the troubadours of Languedoc and the trouvères of the north, yet the custom of a solo effort accompanied by a refrain in which all could take part was nothing new, and in fact was a prominent feature of the liturgy in early Christian times when the entire congregation joined in the singing of the antiphon after each successive verse of the psalm. However it was not until a very much later date that the ballad made its first appearance in England, it was in fact during the fifteenth century, the era of the Mystery Play, that the bulk of our ballad repertoire was composed. It was from the ballad that the folk carol evolved.

It is no exaggeration to say that British folk music has now been more thoughtfully studied than that of any other nation. A sharp distinction is drawn between popular song and folk song, a distinction upon which British students insist far more than students abroad. A popular song is the creation of an individual composer, whereas the folk tune is the product of the joint efforts of a community. It is a communal composition of which some specimen was at some time or other launched into use by an individual. It is handed down by oral tradition, each singer learning his own ditties, twisting and altering them as he thinks best and passing them on to his neighbour. A dozen generations and a thousand repetitions may have gone to the shaping of one folk tune. Very often the melodies are of a much finer quality than the words, education being more of a factor in the composing of a poem than a tune.

Folk song bears a close resemblance to Gregorian music in that it is frequently found with a very free rhythm and cast in the idiom of the ancient ecclesiastical modes.¹ Again like the Plain-chant the music is very intimately wedded to the text, so much so

¹ Knud Jeppeson, *The Polyphonic Vocal Style of the Sixteenth Century*, p. 68.

that, as Cecil Sharp has found from his own personal experience,¹ the singer often finds it impossible to render the melody apart from the words. It is noticeable too that there is in folk music little suggestion of folk harmony, and folk music for instrumental performance does not exist. Well over five thousand English folk tunes have now been collected, most of them in the Dorian and Mixolydian modes. In Scotland folk song is pentatonic, as in the familiar example of "Auld Lang Syne." The melodies are constructed on a five note scale Doh Ray Me Soh Lah, or else Doh Ray Fah Soh Lah, the "pien tones" or half-tones steps being regarded as ornamental and deliberately omitted to avoid any suggestion of the finality inherent in the perfect cadence.² A considerable portion of our Gregorian repertoire is characterised by a very strong pentatonic feeling, a fact that has inclined scholars to believe that the Chant was originally composed within the framework of the five note scale.³

It is a mistake, however, to imagine that folk song is necessarily primitive or archaic, for it is still composed today in unsophisticated communities where conditions of life call for self-entertainment. Although it has sometimes been known for genuine folk song to have made its appearance in our large industrial cities, as in the case of "The Chelsea Lavender Song,"⁴ folk music may be styled the music of the countryside and art music the music of the town. Folk song therefore comes out of the soil. It is the poor man's treasury, the music of the peasant and the ploughboy, the voice of a cultured peasantry. It is moreover a national music and expresses racial characteristics in a very striking way. For instance, there is no confusing the music of Ireland with that of England or Russia, for each has a style peculiar to the spirit of its people. In each case there is not only a homogeneity of style, but a something—a national impulse—that comes from the soil itself, combined with a well-ordered beauty that is the hall-mark of the cultured composer. We would do well to reflect and to remind ourselves in the words of a modern author,

¹ Wilfrid Mellers, *Music and Society*, chap. i, p. 27.

² Gustave Reese, *Music in the Middle Ages*, p. 160.

³ Cf. *Liber Usualis*, In *Nativitate Domini*, *Ad Primam Missam in Noct.* It is noticeable that in the chant setting for the Communion of this Mass, the intervals Me—Fah, and Te—Doh are entirely absent.

⁴ Stanford and Forsyth, *History of Music*, p. 213.

of what it meant to have a popular tradition which both the people and the more sensitive souls whom we call artists could share together as a common inheritance. The Gothic cathedral, as well as a good deal of medieval music, proves how tenuous was then the distinction between the average human being and the artist. It is dubious how far the improved sanitation and more universal literacy of later times outweighs such cultural reciprocity.¹

The carol is a gipsy folk song. It is in our national repertoire of carol music that the finest specimens of English folk song are to be found. Sometimes written in ballad form, sometimes as a one-rime iambic tercet, the carol is always childlike, spontaneous and direct in expression. It is essentially a song of joy, and its jubilant melodies are found accompanying the most solemn and sacred subjects. It is, in the words of Percy Dearmer, pre-eminently "pure and truthful, clean and merry as the sunshine," and it is surely a pity that their presence in church is sometimes resented by those who, led by a more personal and individual asceticism of a later age, are unable in their own private lives to assign to gaiety any place in holiness of life. The carol in its artless simplicity is "an antidote to the sophistication and levity of much present-day music and literature, patronised by those who are out of touch with the deeper issues of life and in whose minds seriousness is associated with gloom." Like the Gothic cathedral, these "masterpieces of tantalising simplicity," as Professor Manly calls them, are a national creation and represent the layman's contribution to religion.

It was during the fifteenth century that our carol repertoire was composed. The carol arose not only as a result of Chaucerian and Humanistic influence, but as part of a movement that had begun as far back as the ninth century. With the rise of the art of troping we see the first signs of the emancipation of the common people from the old austerity and the "traditional conservatism of the Church which for so long had forbidden the dance and the drama, denounced communal singing and frowned on any tendency of the faithful to disport themselves on feast days."² For

¹ Wilfrid Mellers, *Music and Society*, chap. i. p. 20.

² "Nullus in festivitate S. Joannis, vel quibuslibet sanctorum solemnitatibus, solstitia aut ballationes vel saltationes aut caraulas aut cantica diabolica exerceat." St. Ouen's Life of St. Eligius, II, 15, quoted by Percy Dearmer, *Oxford Book of Carols*, p. vii. and p. viii.

centuries the people had clamoured for something less severe than the old Plainsong melodies, and in the twelfth century their dramatic spirit was in revolt.¹ Anthems, tropes, sequences were sung with increasing dramatic emphasis until eventually, from the liturgical drama of the sanctuary, the Mystery drama and the carol evolved. It was the age of the secularising of the arts in which St. Francis of Assisi (1181-1226), that most Christian of saints and most genial of ascetics, was one of the first in the field. St. Francis, or "the little Frenchman," as he was popularly called, was a typically gay troubadour speaking the language of the love-poets. It was he who first popularised the crib and the tableau, and it was before the crèche erected in his hermitage at Greccio that the first carols were sung and danced. He was in fact the parent of the carol, and it was largely through the activities of his followers that they were popularised. Gustave Reese² goes so far as to claim that a very large proportion of the texts of our fifteenth- and sixteenth-century carols were composed by the Sons of St. Francis in the course of their missionary activities. Known as "Les Jongleurs de Dieu," or "God's tumblers," their genial compositions took the form of professions of Christian faith that were all the more Christian for being so jolly. The carol is a product of the bright and genial spirituality of the Franciscan friary.

The Mystery Play was a dramatisation of a Bible story. The subject matter of the drama was often determined not only by the guild members themselves but by some special feature of the locality. For example, "The Marriage Feast of Cana" was invariably produced by the Guild of Vintners. At York "The Building of the Ark" was performed by the Guild of Shipwrights. At Chester it was the tradition for the Guild of Watermen to present "The Ark and the Flood." It is sometimes claimed that the Mystery drama dates back as far as the fourth century, but although it was found in France at an early date, its first appearance

¹ The following is an example of the abuse which sometimes affected the liturgical drama of the period: "The feast of the ass, celebrated annually at Beauvais on 14 January was a dramatisation of the flight into Egypt. A girl, carrying an infant gorgeously dressed, processed from the cathedral to the church of St. Etienne. Entering the choir, she took up a position before the altar, —still riding the ass. Mass was celebrated in the course of which the words 'Hin han' were chanted in imitation of the bray." W. J. Henderson, *Forerunners of the Italian Opera*. Quoted by Alec Robertson, *Interpretation of Plainchant*, chap. v, p. 63.

² Gustave Reese, *Music in the Renaissance*, chap. xv, p. 766.

in England was at Dunstable in Bedfordshire in 1110. The performing of a Mystery Play was an occasion of tremendous enthusiasm. It was looked upon not only as an outward profession of Christian belief but also as the highest form of entertainment. Nowhere in the country was the drama more popular than at Chester, and on one occasion twenty-four performances were given in the course of a single day. It was for the Mystery drama that so many of our carols were purposely composed.

At first these carols were intended, as were the organ concertos of Handel (1685-1759), as intermezzi or interludes to entertain the audience during the interval. The singers would take the stage led by a musician carrying a portable organ strapped to his shoulders, blowing with his left hand and fingering with his right. The carollers would process to and fro across the stage to the great delight of the crowd. Enthusiasm would sometimes reach such a height that the procession would leave the stage altogether and parade out into the street and round the town. The carollers were very popular, and keen rivalry arose between actors and singers. There was no limit to the demands an enthusiastic audience would make upon their resources. At Chester on one memorable occasion the singers had been called to the footlights so repeatedly that their repertoire became exhausted. The aggrieved audience not only set about the hapless carollers but wrecked the stage and reduced the premises to a shambles.

By the middle of the fifteenth century the carol had found its way into the Mystery Play and was sung as part of the drama. One of the most popular Mysteries was the Coventry play called "The Pageant of the Shearmen and the Tailors," specially written for the feast of Corpus Christi instituted by Pope Urban IV in 1264. A number of fine specimens were written for this pageant: "The Coventry Carol," "The Song of the Angels," "The Lullaby of the Innocents" and "The Song of the Shepherds." The Play is remarkable for its *naïveté* and childlike simplicity. The shepherds straight from the fields enter the manger to pay their tribute to the Infant King. One shepherd makes an offering of his pipe exclaiming:

I have nothing to present with thy child
But my pipe. (Hold, hold, take it in thy hand.)
Wherein much pleasure that I have found.

And now to honour thy glorious birth,
Thou shalt have it to make thee mirth.¹

"The Song of the Shepherds," written to be sung as part of the play itself, is a typical example of the simplicity and artlessness of the medieval folk carol:

As I rode out this enders night,
Of three jolly shepherds I saw a sight,
And all around their fold a star shon bright,
They sang terly terlow,
They sang terly terlow,
So merrily the shepherds their pipes can blow.²

The great majority of our English carols were written in the course of the two hundred and fifty years between the death of Chaucer in 1400 and the expulsion of the Rev. Robert Herrick from his parish by Oliver Cromwell in 1647. In 1652 an Act was passed by Parliament which proclaimed the celebrating of Christmas and the singing of carols in honour of the Blessed Virgin a legal offence, and in little over twelve years the Puritan Reformers for whom Christmas was nothing more than "The Profane Man's Ranting Day" and "The Old Heathen's Feasting Day," had all but banished the carol from the land. Although a great wealth of carol literature must have perished in the destruction wrought by the Cromwellian soldiery, some did survive in the form of manuscripts³ and crudely printed broadsheets. Fortunately music printing had been long under way, and Wynkyn de Worde, who in 1495 had produced his first specimens of sheet music, had also as early as 1530 been able to place on the market a collection of songs with both texts and music. But the greater number of folk tunes however were driven underground and, as in the case of "The Somerset Wassail," recently unearthed

¹ W. J. Phillips, *Carols, their origin and connection with the Mystery Play*, p. 21.

² *Idem*, p. 105.

³ Our knowledge of fifteenth-century music has been enriched by the recent discovery of two manuscripts, the Aosta MS. and the Egerton MS. No. 3307 of the British Museum. The latter is a liturgical MS. dating from 1450 or earlier, and is the larger of the two. It contains sixteen hymns, a Mass, two settings of the Passion, twelve carols, twenty-two cantilenae, and a goliard drinking song. The presence of these carols and cantilenae in an otherwise liturgical MS. has led scholars to believe that they were performed at liturgical functions.

by Cecil Sharp, survived in folk song. In this way much that might otherwise have been lost was preserved for posterity.

Carol singing did actually revive to some extent about 1660 with the establishing of the first publishing firm by John Playford, but instead of the old carols returning, new ones were written of the "pork and pudding" sort that were scarcely more than eating-songs. For with the loss of the national religion the artist and his artistry were lost too, and the arts struggled on alone, independent of the vital inspiration the old faith had always quickened, and under which they had for so many centuries grown and flourished. When Charles Dickens wrote his *Christmas Carol* the carol was virtually extinct, and when in 1822 Davies Gilbert¹ published his *Collection of Christmas Carols*, as he himself admitted at the time, carolling was a thing of the past. In 1831, J. W. Parker brought out his *Christmas Carols*, but with one solitary exception they amounted to little else than an assortment of hymns of a very poor quality. In 1848, *Christmas Carols, a Sacred Gift* appeared on the market, containing a number of poems on the Nativity but without a musical setting. By now the carol had come to mean anything at all that might be sung at Christmas time. However, very slowly and almost imperceptibly, light was beginning to dawn, for since the middle of the reign of George III (1760-1820) scholars had been assiduously preparing the ground for a revival. Great progress was made in 1836 when Thomas Wright gathered from the Sloane MS. No. 2593 a number of fifteenth-century carols which he published under the title *Songs and Carols*. The Percy Society and The Early English Text Society were now in the field, and in 1847 an unknown collector of folk song came forward with a collection of carol texts which appeared with some justification under the name *A Good Christmas Box*. With the startling discovery in 1850 of Richard Hill's "Commonplace Book," serious efforts were made in all parts of the country to place the old music once more at the disposal of the public, and by the middle of the nineteenth century enough material had been published to make carol

¹ It is a tribute to Davies Gilbert that certain of his carols, notably Nos. 1, 4, 13, 27, 29, 41, and 72, are included in the latest edition of *The Oxford Book of Carols*. This versatile Cornishman besides being at one time M.P. for Bodmin and an enthusiastic agriculturalist, was also a scientist of considerable aptitude. Certain of his scientific concepts were embodied in the construction of the new Westminster Bridge and the unique engineering feat across the Menai Straits.

singing possible. In 1852 the Rev. J. M. Neale and the Rev. T. Helmore came to possess a copy of the *Piae Cantiones*,¹ a Swedish publication of great interest and value, and published from it in the following year twelve carols of excellent quality in *Carols for Eastertide*. This was the first recognition since medieval times of carols apart from Christmas. The modern carol revival was now well under way, and in 1871 the Rev. H. R. Bramley, Fellow of Magdalen College Oxford, and Dr. John Stainer, organist to the College, published *Christmas Carols New and Old*, an anthology of forty-two carols which has had a tremendous influence on carol singing in England ever since. In 1898, the Folk Song Society came into being, and with the tireless activities of Cecil Sharp among the old inhabitants of the rural districts the revival of the folk carol was almost complete, and a wealth of glorious specimens became available to choir masters throughout the land.

Our national carol repertoire is varied and attractive. Every season, every month of the year has its own folk carols proper to the occasion. "My Dancing Day" is a carol for Good Friday; "The Merchants Carol" and "The Bellman's Song" are carols for Passiontide. A popular favourite for the month of May is "The Furry Day Carol," that is, a song for ferial days or fair days. "A Psalm of Sion" may be sung at all times of the year. "The Souling Song," a speciality, is a carol for the feast of All Souls, and the medieval custom of "souling" is still to be met with at Tattenhall in Cheshire to this very day.

Of all our carols those intended for use during the Christmas season are the most abundant and have the most vigorously survived. There is the type that resembles its parent the ballad, as, for example, "The Carnal and the Crane," "Adam lay ybounden," has a lilting rhythm, and is therefore admirably suited for community singing; if, in addition, it is provided with a burden as in "Welcome Yule," then we have the perfect example of a folk carol. "I Sing of a Maiden" is a charming illustration of the lyrical variety. This carol is singled out for special mention by Professor Saintsbury who writes: "In no previous verse had

¹ The *Piae Cantiones* was originally compiled by Theodoricus Petrus of Nyland in Finland in 1582. A copy was brought to this country by the British Minister at Stockholm who presented it to Dr. Neale in 1852. The copy is now in the British Museum. Cf. *The Oxford Book of Carols*, No. 141, p. 285, see footnote.

this Aeolian music—this ‘harp of Ariel’—that distinguishes English at its very best been given to the world.” The Wassail, from the Anglo-Saxon “weshal” meaning “good health,” is a drinking song and a type that has gained great popularity in northern districts. The feast of Christmas coincided with the time the Druids kept their winter festival, and so the Wassail in spite of its pagan associations was incorporated into Christian usage. An attractive variety is the macaronic carol in which lines of Latin, taken very often from one of the Office hymns, are interspersed with phrases in the vernacular, as in the well-known example “In Dulci Jubilo.” But it is the lullabies in honour of the Blessed Virgin that are without a doubt the most charming of our carols. A beautiful example for voices in unison is “The Song of the Nuns of Chester,” taken from the Processional of the Convent of St. Mary. They are macaronic and lyrical in style and were all without any exception composed in pre-Reformation times. Although they were occasionally performed in the course of a Mystery Play, they were primarily written for the crèche, and “The Virgin’s Lullaby,” a polyphonic carol for three voices must rank as one of the most enchanting specimens of all time.

It is due to the industry of such modern scholars as Percy Dearmer, Martin Shaw and Vaughan Williams that carol singing as heard at Christmas time in the cathedrals and churches throughout the country is now one of the most glorious experiences of the year. For not only is it a simple and popular expression of Christian belief in which all can share, but a welcome relaxation from the tumult of twentieth-century everyday life. The carol, as fresh now as ever brings us the peace of medieval England, and today, above the din of national conflict, in a world beset with fear and uncertainty as to the future, comes the message of the carol, sweet and serene:

Love and joy come to you,
And to you your wassail too,
And God bless you, and send you
A happy new year,
And God send you a happy new year.

RHODESIAN PIONEER

By

W. F. REA

FOR MANY REASONS Rhodesia is in the news. It is a rapidly developing country with great possibilities. Like the Union of South Africa, it is both a white man's country and a black man's, and contemporary events with those of the next few years will decide whether the two can live happily together. It is trite to say that it is one of the greatest challenges ever given to humanity. Finally, in 1960 the British Government will be faced with the decision of granting or refusing to the Federation independence within the Commonwealth.

We have the authority of Edmund Burke for saying that if we want to get out of a difficult situation, we should first examine how we got into it. In other words we should look to our history. This is a counsel which those interested in Rhodesia show good signs of following. The last few months alone have seen the appearance of *The Birth of a Dilemma* by Philip Mason, of *Zambesi Sunrise* by W. D. Gale, and of *His Own Oppressor* by B. G. Paver. Catholics too are looking to the part they have taken in Rhodesia's past. Twelve years ago the Dominican Sisters told the magnificent story of their hardships and achievements in *In God's White Robed Army*. Interest has also been shown outside Rhodesia. Last year a novel by C. M. Lakotta was published in Germany entitled *Herz der Wildnis*, which centres round the work of these Sisters and that of the Jesuits among the Pioneers of 1890 and 1891. Arrangements are being made at the moment in the U.S.A. to translate and edit the letters of two of the first Rhodesian Jesuit missionaries, originally published in Brussels in 1882 under the title of *Trois Ans dans l'Afrique Australe. Lettres des Pères H. Depelchin et Ch. Croonenberghs, S.J.*

But it is perhaps surprising that the Church's history in Rhodesia has not attracted more general attention during the last fifty years. For much of it, especially in the early days, has the character of Chesterton's "epic on epic and Iliad on Iliad." It begins

years before the country was called Rhodesia, and before the Pioneers rode northwards in 1890; for there were Catholics among those who were "pioneers before the Pioneers." If we leave out the sixteenth-century Jesuit missionary, Gonçalo da Silveira, it begins with the departure from Grahamstown in what was then Cape Colony, on 16 April 1879, of the Jesuit mission to the Zambesi under Père Henri Depelchin.

As far as material results were concerned, the mission was an almost complete failure. There had been hopes of establishing a mission among the Bamangwatos of Bechuanaland, but their chief, Khama, had already been won over by the London Missionary Society, and so, though he was friendly, he would not allow the Jesuits to settle among his people. So they went further north into what is now Rhodesia, and petitioned the famous Lobengula, chief of the Matabeles, for leave to teach. After a long delay it was refused. Fr. Depelchin then divided the expedition. He sent the two Englishmen whom he had with him, Fr. Augustus Law, the former naval officer, and Brother Hedley, together with the German, Fr. Wehl, and the unbelievably hardy Belgian, Brother de Sadeleer, eastwards, while he himself with most of the others continued northwards towards the Zambesi. Both expeditions ended tragically, the eastern one costing the lives of Fr. Law and Fr. Wehl, and the northern one those of two other priests and four Brothers. Fr. Law kept a diary of the expedition, which tells a story of heroic perseverance and charity. It formed the basis of his biography written in 1893 by Ellis Schreiber. This is now long out of print and almost unobtainable, but a modern biography, based on Fr. Law's journal would more than repay publication.

But the mission, even from a human point of view, was not just a story of lost lives and wasted efforts. Lobengula allowed some of the Jesuits to remain at his capital, Bulawayo. This was not because he wanted them to make converts, but because he thought they could usefully teach the Matabeles agriculture and handicrafts. So the mission of 1879 ultimately led to the establishment of Catholicism in Rhodesia.

To this Jesuit mission station in Bulawayo there was sent in 1882 the man who forms the subject of this article, Fr. Peter Prestage, S.J. Fr. Prestage was to show himself a most holy, resourceful and indefatigable missionary; one who persevered in

his work for years with unflagging energy with no visible results, and when, except to his own unquenchable enthusiasm, no results seemed possible. He was a cheerful and entertaining companion, but blunt and frank; a man who could not be dishonest himself, and who found it hard to believe it of others. In spite of the hardships he had to endure, there was an evenness and placidity about his development, spiritual, intellectual and even physical. "A tight little fellow, holding himself very straight, and possessed of a very good voice," was the description that a contemporary gave of him when he was at school at Stonyhurst in the early fifties. During his years in Africa his voice was impaired by his lavish taking of snuff, because native etiquette demanded that the guest should either take snuff or smoke, but in other respects the same words could have been used of the sun-tanned veteran who on 11 April 1907 set off to walk briskly over the veld on the affairs of the mission, and dropped dead in front of the African who accompanied him.

All that has come down to us about Fr. Prestage shows him to have been heroic, devout and most lovable, if at times slightly exasperating. But what perhaps gives him particular interest is his close association with the beginnings of Rhodesia, and the part he took in two of the great crises of its early history. He was actually one of its founders, for, with the better known Fr. Andrew Hartmann, he was appointed Chaplain to the Pioneers of 1890, being given the honorary rank of Captain. The very enterprising Superior of the Zambesi Mission, Fr. A. M. Daignault, S.J., when offering these two Fathers as Chaplains, suggested to Rhodes that some Dominican nuns from the Convent at King William's Town, Cape Colony, should also go with the expedition as nurses. This was probably Rhodes's first contact with the Society of Jesus which later he came to admire so much. He gladly accepted both suggestions, and it was originally intended that five Sisters, under their twenty-six-year-old Superior, Mother Patrick, should accompany the Pioneer Column. But the danger of attack from Lobengula's *impis* led to their being held back for ten months at Macloutsie on the southern border of Rhodesia. Fr. Prestage was made their Chaplain and so went with them. Consequently he did not enter Mashonaland till 1891, and received less publicity than did Fr. Hartmann, who advanced with the Pioneer Column itself in

1890, and whose name is accordingly perpetuated in Salisbury and its neighbourhood in Hartmann Hill, Hartmann Farm and the recently established Hartmann House of St. George's College. Nevertheless Fr. Prestage, like the Dominican Sisters, who incidentally were the first white women in Mashonaland, was part of the expedition to which present-day Rhodesia owes its existence, and so was among its founders.

When he accompanied the Dominican Sisters to Rhodesia, Fr. Prestage was not coming into a strange country, for he had already been there seven years, partly at Tati, on the borders of Rhodesia and Bechuanaland, and partly at Bulawayo. He had had several meetings with Lobengula and had impressed him favourably, so that at last he was able to obtain what had been refused to earlier Catholic missionaries, leave to open a school in which Christianity might be taught; a site was granted as well. This led to the foundation of the Empandeni mission, about sixty-five miles south-west of Bulawayo, which still flourishes. Nineteen years later Fr. Prestage thus described the critical interview with Lobengula at which he won from him the vital concession.

I told Lobengula that our party was not satisfied with its position in the country; that we had left our home across the sea, and made a long and difficult journey into his country, not in search of gold or money-making, but solely out of a desire to work for his own and his people's good; and that if our position was not altered, I was determined to take every man of our party out of the country; that I would not condescend to keep men in a country where we were not free to work; that we would go to another country where no restriction would be put on our labour.¹

Fr. Prestage then went on to demand a site for a mission, and permission to teach Christianity. He spoke strongly, and to do so to Lobengula in his own capital needed courage. We might be tempted to think that he made the words more forthright in retrospect than they really were; but throughout his life Fr. Prestage was literal-minded to an embarrassing extent. "Honest Peter," he was called by the boys when he was a young man teaching at Stonyhurst, and he kept the characteristic through life. No one was less likely to exaggerate.

¹ MS. account by Fr. Prestage given to the late Fr. F. Johann, S.J., and published in the *Zambesi Mission Record*, July 1908.

So when the Pioneers began to settle down on their lands, Prestage had already several years experience of the country; he spoke the language, understood the Africans, and was well acquainted with Lobengula himself. He was therefore the kind of man to whom the agents of the British South Africa Company might turn for advice. They did so in 1893, in the person of Dr. Jameson himself, and over a decision which is still a matter of dispute in Rhodesian history.

Lobengula had kept a promise he had made of not harming the white men in Mashonaland, but he was unable to prevent his Matabele warriors raiding the country, demanding payments from the Mashonas, burning their kraals, killing their men and carrying off their women and children. The Company's protests were not accepted. The Mashonas, it was said, were the Matabeles' dogs; how they treated them was entirely their affair. Life was impossible for European and Mashona alike. The former must either leave or destroy the Matabele *impis*. The crisis came on 9 July 1893, when the neighbourhood of Fort Victoria, about 150 miles south of Salisbury, was raided, thirty-five men and women were killed, and thirty women and children carried away; kraals were burnt and cattle seized. Prestage was at Fort Victoria at the time.

Jameson had to make the decision. Sir H. B. Lock, the High Commissioner for South Africa had assured him of his support for an expedition against the Matabeles, provided it had met with the approval of the clergy. Jameson asked Prestage's opinion, who gave it with his usual clarity and directness. A few days later he thus described the interview in a letter to Fr. Schomberg Kerr, the Superior of the Mission.

Last Friday at 9.30 Dr. Jameson came to me and said the Administrator¹ would support the Company by his help if the clergy approved of the punishment of the Matabeles. He had already spoken to me on the subject, when I told him I considered there was just cause for the Company taking up arms against the Aman-dabeles (*i.e.*, the Matabeles) in defence of the Makalakas (*i.e.*, the Mashonas), who had been unjustly and grievously wronged. He asked me if I would telegraph my view to Rhodes.

The telegram to Rhodes read as follows:

¹ A mistake for High Commissioner. Jameson himself was Administrator.

I consider there is most just cause for punishing the Amandabeles at once. Without prompt punishment there is every possibility of the same atrocities recurring.¹

Prestage's conviction of the ineradicable cruelty and injustice of the Matabele régime, one of "iniquity and devilry," as he described it to Fr. Schomberg Kerr on 20 July 1893, was of long standing. As early as May 1883 he had written, "Unless the Matabeles are put down by brute force, I fear that they will never improve." When he looked back after the revolt had been put down, his ideas were unchanged. "If ever there was a just war, the Matabele War was just," he wrote. This verdict is of considerable interest because the justification for this expedition against Lobengula has been called in question ever since. It has been said that the Company, having been disappointed by finding Mashonaland less rich than it had expected, decided to recompense itself by taking Matabeleland, and therefore deliberately provoked a quarrel with Lobengula.² But against this censure on the Company must be placed the verdict of Prestage, who had no axe to grind, who knew the people and the circumstances, and who gave his life to the service of the Africans.

But though he was certain that the military régime of the Matabeles had to be destroyed as a condition of humane existence for the Mashonas and even for the Matabeles themselves, Prestage was fully aware of their good qualities, and spoke up for them when they were in the right. He was thus able to win their confidence, and how thoroughly he had done so was shown three years later.

The defeat and death of Lobengula did not end trouble with his people. In 1895 the *rinderpest* came to Rhodesia for the first time, and began to destroy the cattle. The Government destroyed many more in infected areas in a cruel but necessary attempt to stamp out the disease. The afflicted Matabeles mistakenly but understandably thought that this slaughter of what seemed to them healthy animals was an attempt to exterminate their race. They had also, as Prestage told a Bulawayo paper, been very badly treated by the native police, "who abused their authority to an enormous degree."³ Hence they rose in rebellion.

¹ *Zambesi Mission Record*, April 1910, p. 72.

² See the opinions given in *Rhodes*, by Sarah Gertrude Millin. London 1933 Chapter XX.

³ *Bulawayo Chronicle*, 18 April 1896.

Prestage had by now returned to Empandeni. It only seemed a question of time before the tribes round the mission would join the rebels. He therefore took the only course which seemed to give any prospect of maintaining the peace. In spite of the rising excitement and spreading revolt, he went alone and unarmed into the Motopopo Hills to persuade the chiefs to remain at peace. Little is known about what happened, for Prestage spoke little of it. But certainly he returned with eighteen representatives of the chiefs, who handed themselves over to the British as a pledge of their peoples' loyalty. So peace was kept round Empandeni. Prestage's bravery was mentioned in Parliament by the Colonial Secretary, Joseph Chamberlain, and so was reported in *The Times*.

But what he did had perhaps wider effects. It was on 14 April 1896 that he had gone into the hills to speak to the chiefs. By August the Matabeles, after continual defeats had been driven into the Motopopo Hills, whence it was difficult to dislodge them. It was said that larger forces would be needed and that war would have to be carried on into the next year. Then Rhodes made one of the famous decisions of his life. He would go unarmed into the Motopopo Hills and meet the rebels, gain their confidence, and so persuade them to make peace. As everyone knows, he succeeded.

"It was," says a study of Rhodes,¹ "a decision at once too simple and too dangerous to have been arrived at by anyone else." But, as the reader knows, Prestage had four months before in that same part of Rhodesia, come to just the same decision, had shown equal bravery and had had equal success. It is at least possible that Rhodes's decision was inspired by knowledge of what had so recently been done by Prestage, who therefore was the direct means of keeping some of the Matabeles out of the war, and perhaps the indirect means of bringing it to an end.

With the suppression of the Matabele rebellion and the subsequent Mashona one, the pioneer period in Rhodesia may perhaps be said to have ended, and with it the pioneer days of Fr. Prestage. Henceforth he was able to devote himself in more placid conditions to tough but fruitful and rewarding missionary work. Though cultured and refined, "the charming and very cultured representative of the Jesuits," as he was called by Colonel

¹ Cecil Rhodes, by William Plomer. London 1933, p. 107.

Frank Johnson, the commander of the Pioneer Column,¹ he was a missionary of the old style, travelling on foot, and sleeping upon the ground, with a log for a pillow, and a *skerm* of branches round him, and a fire to keep away wild animals. Yet in ways he was unexpectedly modern. Though the science of missiology was still in the future, and he could hardly have penetrated into anthropology and ethnology, yet, besides trying to get a scientific as well as a practical knowledge of their language, he tried to master the history and traditions of the Matabeles; most of this he had to find out from verbal enquiry. In the third number of the *Zambesi Mission Record* (February 1899) he wrote an account of how Lobengula came to be king, whose main outlines are confirmed by an article by Chief Simon Segola in the 1959 issue of *N.A.D.A.* (Southern Rhodesian Native Affairs Annual).

He died as perhaps he would have wished, tramping over the veld he loved, with a solitary companion, one from the peoples of Africa to whose spiritual and temporal happiness he had given his life.

MIRACLES

By

J. M. CAMERON

SOME YEARS AGO I was discussing experiments of the kind conducted by Rhine and Soal, experiments designed to test ESP and PK, with a number of people, among them two friends whom I will characterise as the Elderly Scientist and the Young Philosopher. We were confronted with a mass of statistical data which, assuming the experiments had been conducted properly, strongly suggested that some "guessing" and other performances had achieved a degree of success which went far beyond what could have been achieved by "chance." Our reactions were curiously diverse. The Elderly Scientist, confronted with evidence

¹ *Great Days*, by Frank Johnson. London, 1940, p. 76.

for the supposed PK effect, cried out passionately: "No matter what evidence you may bring, I will never abandon the laws of classical physics!" (Of course, he may have been wrong in supposing that this sacrifice was demanded of him by the experimental results.) The Young Philosopher brooded for some time on the situation and then said: "This inclines me to suppose, not that the statistical data have to be rejected, but that there must be something wrong with the received theory of probability." I said to myself, and not to the company: "In what conceivable context could 'guessing' the right Zener card or willing that a dice should fall this way rather than that have the slightest importance? What issues can turn on such trivialities? Why on earth does Professor Rhine think the results of his work likely to slay the dragon of scientific materialism? Doesn't all this belong at best to the world of natural science, and if so its consequences are in themselves without philosophico-theological importance, or at worst to the squalid world of table-turning and levitated banjoes in darkened rooms and regurgitated cheesecloth?"

These very diverse reactions to the same set of facts and generalisations suggest that the evaluation of the data of experience and of the testimony of others springs from the presence, in the person doing the evaluation, of a set of presuppositions, preconceptions or what Newman often calls an "antecedent judgment or presumption." It is plain that Hume, for example, in his essay on Miracles, rests his confident dismissal of miracles as *impossible*—no matter how well attested, by the ordinary standards of historical investigation, they may be—upon an antecedent presumption as to what is possible in nature. The position of the Elderly Scientist is much the same. The reaction of the Young Philosopher is slightly different. He has a feeling that something must be wrong somewhere, though without further investigation he is not prepared to say what this is; but his suggestion that we should first of all have a new look at probability theory all the same rests upon a reluctance to accept what the evidence of the experiments *seems* to point to, and this reluctance itself has to be justified in terms of a set of antecedent presumptions. My own reaction, though more richly prejudiced, seems to be similarly grounded, since it presumes the validity of a set of notions as to the kinds of happenings upon which serious philosophico-theological issues are likely to turn.

To say all this, and to say no more, would be simply to enunciate a set of sociological or psychological truisms: that we approach new phenomena, encountered directly or reported, in the light of established expectations, methodological presuppositions, generalisation taken to be well-founded, and what have you. This is true enough as a matter of fact and accounts both for the existence of well organised traditions in, say, natural science or historical investigation or theology, and for the stupor that overcomes these traditions and renders them sterile in certain crucial situations. I need mention only such cases as the failure of Galileo's fellow academics to see the point of the new astronomical observations or the blind rage of some Victorian ecclesiastics when confronted with the theory of Natural Selection. Philosophically, what matters is not the justification of attitudes with reference to antecedent presumptions, but the justification of the antecedent presumptions themselves. And this is of course what philosophers have commonly concerned themselves with: with the examinations of the presuppositions of the arts and sciences (from physics to literary criticism) and with the conclusions only in so far as they bring out the force and character of the presuppositions. But it is also the task of the philosopher to determine what these presuppositions are in particular cases; until these are established, it is not clear what it is we are to discuss.

Here I am primarily concerned with establishing the force and character of some of the presuppositions which seem to be entailed by some characteristic ways of talking about miracles, and scarcely at all with the justification of the presuppositions themselves. If I can advance a very small way to making it clear what it is we can profitably talk about in connection with the meaning and application of the concept of miracle I shall be well satisfied, though I am not clear that I have discharged even this task well.

It is plain that even on Humean presuppositions we are, in any discussion of *miracle*, concerned with a class of possible events. When Hume, apropos the alleged Jansenist miracles, writes:

... what have we to oppose to such a cloud of witnesses, but the absolute impossibility or miraculous nature of the events, which they relate?

he cannot be supposed to be saying that the concept of miracle is a pseudo-concept, like that of "square circle," for this would

run altogether counter to one of his central doctrines in both the *Treatise* and the *Enquiry* (though is it somewhat muffled in the *Enquiry*), the doctrine, namely, that what is conceivable is possible.

. . . there can be no *demonstrative* arguments to prove, that those instances of which we have had no experience resemble those of which we have had experience. We can at least conceive a change in the course of nature; which sufficiently proves that such a change is not absolutely impossible. To form a clear idea of anything is an undeniable argument for its possibility, and is alone a refutation of any pretended demonstration against it.¹

Now, one of the grounds of Hume's belief in the impossibility of miracles is that "a miracle is a violation of the laws of nature," and that since these laws are established upon "a firm and unalterable experience," "the proof against a miracle; from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined."² Such an argument cannot be *demonstrative* in the logical sense since what Hume says is impossible, namely, a departure from the order of nature ("violation" is, and is intended to be, an emotive term), is conceivable and is therefore possible in the sense of logically possible. It is a little ironical, no doubt, that the "absolute impossibility" of the quotation from the *Enquiry* should be set against the "such a change is not absolutely impossible" of the *Treatise*. But it seems to me most unlikely that there is a genuine contradiction here. The doctrines that what is conceivable is possible and that no argument from experience is ever demonstrative are so central in Hume, that for him to withdraw them would be to surrender not an expendable outwork of his system, but the citadel itself. I conclude, then, that we are bound to interpret the expression, "the absolute impossibility or miraculous nature of the events," in some weaker sense than that of logical impossibility. It is, I take it, a rhetorical expression designed to express in the strongest possible way Hume's conviction as a historian that those who bear testimony to miracles are always lying or mistaken.

In discussing miracles we are concerned with a class of possible events. What, then, are the criteria for determining the characteristics of those possible events which may properly be counted as miraculous?

¹ *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Book I, Part III, Section vi.

² *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, Section X, Part I.

I will argue that an event's being a departure from (or a "violation of," if we wish to use Hume's picturesque and loaded language) the known order of nature is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for its being classed as miraculous, in what I shall call the *primary* sense of "miraculous." If we suppose that Hoyle's theory of the appearance *ex nihilo*, that is, without causal antecedents, of atoms of hydrogen in the Universe, is established by induction from observations and not hypothetico-deductively—I see no reason *in principle* why this should not be the case—then we should be confronted with what certainly looks like a departure from the known order of nature, or the order of nature as hitherto known; but if it should be established that such an event occurs frequently and not, say, only on those occasions when Mr. Hoyle coughs in a significant way, then there will be no difficulty in accommodating these phenomena within the order of nature. In other words, the oddity of an event, measured by hitherto received notions as to the order of nature, is never in itself a ground for supposing that there is here a departure from the order of nature. The order of nature is what it is, not what it must be. This is why "violation of the order of nature" is such an unsuitable expression since it presupposes that the order of nature is such that it must be what it is; but this is the "must" of logic and not of fact, or the "must" of the Newtonian model conceived as a sacred and inviolable order, a *Tao*. This is why I thought the Elderly Scientist showed an unnecessarily protective attitude to the laws of classical physics when faced with the allegedly queer happenings chronicled by Rhine and Soal. PK effects are certainly no odder than hydrogen atoms without causal antecedents or, for that matter, the supposed behaviour of fundamental particles in Quantum theory.

Again, it seems to me—if this is not the same point over again—that an event or chain of events of which we can offer no explanation or no sufficient explanation does not as such count as miraculous, not on the perhaps trivial ground that to claim with regard to any event that it is miraculous is to imply an explanation of a particular sort, but on the more substantial ground that the absence of an explanation or of an adequate explanation does not entail that the event in question has or has not causal antecedents of any assignable sort. We are strongly tempted—I am strongly tempted—to take instances of heroic virtue or of surpassing

wickedness or of the highest artistic achievements as in one obvious sense departs from the order of nature. This explains why we quite rightly employ "miraculous" in a transferred or metaphorical sense in connection with such matters (e.g., we might say of Act IV, Scene iii of *The Winter's Tale* or of the posthumous quartets of Beethoven that they are miraculous in this sense); but here the order of nature is "the ordinary course of nature" and many things happen outside the ordinary course of nature, and are often though by no means always for this reason very hard to explain. Monstrous births, the survival of the coelocanth, the collision of two galaxies, might—I do not say they *are*—be instances of departures from the order of nature in this sense—better, perhaps, the appearance of a "Hampdenshire Wonder,"¹ but no one would be inclined to claim that such events were miraculous.

The original meaning of *miraculum* is that of a wonder or marvel, and is the word employed in the Vulgate to translate a variety of Hebrew and Greek expressions used to refer to the works of God and Jesus Christ in the Old and New Testaments. Many of the miracles in this sense are or may be events of the kind which I have already ruled out as not being miraculous in the primary sense. Examples would be the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night (if indeed this refers, as some commentators suppose, to a volcano), the passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea, and many others. Such events are ascribed to the will of God because the Scriptures treat all events, including events of an indubitably commonplace kind, under the aspect of sacred history, that is, as signs and expressions of God's activity and providential guidance. This sense of the concept of miracle would have a very open texture indeed, since no event would be ruled out as counting as a wonderful work of God, and any event could be so counted. (It is perhaps in this sense that some people in this country were inclined to view the weather in the English Channel at the time of the Dunkirk evacuation as miraculous.) There may be—it will depend in part upon one's theological views—a sense in which it is proper to use "miraculous" or "wonderful" in this indiscriminate way. But since we have here no criteria for distinguishing what is miraculous from what is not, it is useless for our present purposes.

¹ See J. D. Beresford, *The Hampdenshire Wonder*, 1911.

Nevertheless, a distinction between this secondary and for our purposes too general sense is drawn in the Bible. I take as my example a passage from Peter's speech on the day of Pentecost.

Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, even as ye yourselves know. . . .¹

Later, referring to the Resurrection,

This Jesus did God raise up, wherof we all are witnesses.²

Here are suggested four conditions which are both necessary and in conjunction sufficient for the classification of an event as miraculous.

1. A miracle is a personal act, ascribed to God, who is considered as its primary agent.
2. A miracle is a mighty work or a wonder, that is, it must appear to be outside the ordinary course of nature.
3. A miracle is an act performed before witnesses.
4. The function of a miracle is not simply to astonish but to offer a guarantee of something and to teach—in this case to be a sign of God's approval of Christ and a manifestation of God's intentions in regard to men.

How we are to determine whether or not in a particular case a given event has satisfied all four conditions is no doubt a difficult matter; and it is possible to take up the position that conditions 1. and 4. *cannot* be satisfied by any event. Such a position would be that of the atheist, the agnostic, the Spinozistic pantheist, or the kind of Deist Hume presumably has in mind as a sympathetic reader of the essay on Miracles, one, that is, who conceives of the relation between God and the Universe as one in which God establishes the order of nature as a self-sufficient causal system with which He does not interfere. This would only be to say, at least on Hume's principles, that two of the conditions cannot be satisfied in view of what we know to be the case or of all that we *can* know to be the case about the world; that is, it is impossible for miracles to take place in the weak or factual sense of "impossible"; a miracle is still conceivable, even though

¹ Acts II. 22.

² *Ib.*, II. 32.

persons with views such as I have mentioned believe that two of the conditions named above are unsatisfiable in fact. If one should hold that such expressions as "God's act," "God's intentions," "God's approval" and so on are without sense, then of course such a one would be committed to saying, not that miracles in the sense laid down cannot happen, but that the concept of miracle so defined is not a concept at all but a vacuous expression. Such a person would not be committed to the view that extraordinary and inexplicable departures from the order of nature are inconceivable or impossible.

So far as I can discover, the conditions I have suggested as necessary and sufficient for the classification of an event as miraculous are pretty much those presupposed in the great mass of writing on the question which forms the background to Hume's discussion of miracles. This is certainly the view of Locke in the posthumous *Discourse on Miracles*, and it is the view of Butler in *The Analogy*, to mention only the most eminent. Hume himself, perhaps not altogether inadvertently, is more ambiguous. The main emphasis in his text is upon the condition that a miracle is "a violation of the laws of nature," and the main burden of his attack is upon the possibility of this, or on the possibility of there ever being satisfactory evidence for this, and not upon the possibility of extraordinary divine acts or of such acts being designed to teach or to guarantee the trustworthiness of a teacher. We may say that Hume attempts so far as possible to loosen the discussion from the theological framework into which it had up to then been fitted. He frequently speaks as though an event's being "a violation of the laws of nature" is both a necessary and a sufficient condition for its being denominated miraculous. It is true, in a footnote he says that "a miracle may be accurately defined, a transgression of a law of nature by a particular volition of the Deity, or by the interposition of some invisible agent."¹ This is unsatisfactory since it leaves out of account the condition that there should be witnesses (he writes that "a miracle may be discoverable by men or not"); and that the event in question should have a "moral" function. But in the absence of these conditions we should have no means of judging whether or not one of the conditions upon which Hume here relies, namely that it should be "a transgression. . . by a particular volition of the Deity," is satisfied, for

¹ *Enquiry*, Section X, Part I.

it is from its being *prima facie* designed for the instruction of witnesses that we move to the inference that a particular event is an extraordinary act of God.

The lack of care with which Hume handles the concept of miracle may account for those unsatisfactory features of his argument which were noted by Mill.

All . . . which Hume has made out, and this he must be considered to have made out, is, that . . . no evidence can prove a miracle to anyone who did not previously believe the existence of a being or beings with supernatural power; or who believed himself to have full proof that the character of the Being whom he recognises, is inconsistent with his having seen fit to interfere on the occasion in question.¹

This, of course, is much less than Hume himself thinks he has made out. There is one respect in which Hume ought to be excused. In much of the polemical writing of the period Christian theologians sometimes speak as though a miracle *quâ* "violation of the laws of nature" has of itself a character as a proof of God's existence and of His intention in relation to men—that an extraordinary event as such is sufficient to elicit the response of faith. This was not, I think, the position of Butler or of any first-rate mind. When Newman writes that "to consider [miracles] as mere exceptions to physical order. . . is to degrade them from the station which they hold in the plans and provisions of the Divine Mind, and to strip them of their real use and dignity; for as naked and isolated facts they do but deform an harmonious system"; and: "A miracle is no argument to one who is deliberately, and on principle, an atheist"; he is doing theology in the tradition of Butler. Hume's error is no error at all if we take the essay on Miracles as mere polemic, for there certainly were those who had elected to stand on the ground he attacked. But as a contribution to the philosophical discussion of the topic it strikes me as negligible and sometimes disingenuous.²

¹ J. S. Mill, *System of Logic*, Bk. III, Ch. XXV.

² It is true, the point of Section X of the *Enquiry* lies almost certainly in its connection with Section XI, "Of a particular Providence and of a future State." This is to say that "Of Miracles"—in any case a fragment intended for the earlier *Treatise* and not then published—is designed to lead up to the contention that, even if we admit the Argument from Design for God's existence, this argument

The concept of miracle is fastened so securely to a certain theological framework, and belongs so indubitably to a certain kind of discourse which is itself religious or theological, that a discussion of it outside this framework would resemble a discussion of such terms as "mass" and "energy" outside the framework of post-Newtonian physics. It is true, there is no absolute line of division between specialised talk and common talk and there is a certain overlap. "Mass" and "energy" in physics retain a trace of the use which belongs to them in the common speech from which they were originally taken, and so with "atom," "particle" and other terms. An analogous relationship holds between such religious terms as "grace," "supernatural," "charity," "miracle" and so on and common speech; though the relationship is reversed. In a broadcast account of a recent railway accident between Liverpool and Manchester the announcer spoke of passengers as having had "miraculous escapes."

To say that the concept of miracle belongs to a certain theological framework and occurs in a certain sort of specialised language is to point out something that is true and important; and an analysis of "miracle" which forgets this will run into the difficulties that I rightly or wrongly think to be present in Hume's treatment. But there is a certain danger in so doing, especially today. It may be argued, perhaps quite properly, that Christian discourse constitutes a linguistic system such that the meaning of the atomic propositions within the system cannot be stated outside the system, that is, cannot be translated into non-Christian discourse and cannot therefore be elucidated except with reference to the system as a whole. Christian discourse will then be strictly analogous to physical discourse of a specialised sort; and its terms will within the system occupy a position analogous to the terms of physical theory in a scientific system. One could stop at this point and say to those who are inexpert in the language or who do not wish to use it: Between you and us there is a great gulf fixed. This gulf can only be crossed by certain transcendental ladders labelled "decision" or "the leap" or what not. Ordinary construction methods (that is, rational discourse, historical investigation,

does not suffice to establish the existence of a Deity who could intelligibly be said to be the Author of miracles. But this is another matter and one with which I am not here concerned. In any case Section X has often been treated as making its point independently of Section XI.

and so on) are absolutely useless in constructing a bridge. Philosophy is especially useless.

There are many influences that tend to push one into this kind of position. It seems capable of being made consistent with the most modish schools of philosophy. It seems to free Christians from the fatigue of controversy with unbelievers and pernicky inquirers. It seems substantially the position of the Barthians and of some Christian philosophers in England. You have what Mr. Richard Hare has called a "blick" or you haven't; and if you haven't got a blick, then there is no rational procedure for acquiring one.

I feel very dissatisfied with this position, though I recognise that there are august precedents. (I think of Tertullian's: "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What has the Academy to do with the Church?") If we pursue the analogy of such specialised languages as those of physical science—without the suggestions afforded by such languages it seems to me doubtful that such a position could ever have been formulated—we may see what is wrong with it. Newtonian physics, for example, is a systematic language such that terms such as "mass," "momentum," "motion," can only be grasped within the system. To ask for the explanation of one term is to ask for the explanation of the system. All the same, it is not *optional* whether or not to enter this system once we begin to examine the world and what goes on in it. Once we begin to reflect upon the paths of projectiles and planets and at the same time become acquainted with the Newtonian theory, then, except in the most trivial sense, we no longer have any option; we cannot but enter the system for we are caught in a logical noose. Now, what our particular point of entry into the system may be seems unimportant. It may be the fall of an apple or the contemplation of the planetary ellipses. But once we are inside the system, the pressure which keeps us there is not the pressure of a formal logical system, the pressure of "consistency," but the pressure of the actual world.

In much the same way, it seems to me that no Christian could really be satisfied with the view that Christian discourse had the consistency of a purely formal system, but that one could point to nothing in the actual world which was a good reason for entering or staying in the system. The points of entry into the system might be as various as the points of entry into the New-

tonian theory. For some it might be what was thought to be satisfactory evidence for such allegedly historical events as the Crucifixion or the Resurrection. For others it might be a moral crisis no other issue out of which could be seen but the obedience of faith. For some it might be—why not?—a “wonder,” something taken to be a sign of God’s extraordinary activity and having the function of accrediting Christianity as a Divine Revelation: a miracle. The traditional view of miracles as evidences for the truth of Christianity seems to me entirely right, at least in the sense that belief in the actual occurrence of what seemed to fit the specification of miracle would be a reason, and a good one, for taking the Christian claim seriously; and if on other grounds the claim were to be taken seriously, then what was taken to be a miracle might even have the character of a *proof*, in so far as this term could have an application in this context.

It would seem to me to be wrong, then, to say that Hume or any other unbelieving philosopher is as such debarred—he hasn’t the right “blick”—from discussing such concepts as those of providence or miracle. What is wrong with Hume’s discussion of miracles is not so much his antecedent presumption that the world is so constituted that miracles can’t happen, as his failure—perhaps not culpable—to inform himself adequately as to the nature and teachings of Christianity before embarking on the discussion.

LAETENTUR CAELI

The Council of Florence

“LET the heavens rejoice . . .” So begins the Decree of Union signed by all but two of the Eastern delegates at Florence on 5 July 1439. In the light of the forthcoming General Council, and of the repeated emphasis which John XXIII has given to the problems of reunion, attention will surely be focused anew on the Council of Florence and its Decree of Union. Hence we may be forgiven if we apply those outworn adjectives “opportune” and “timely” to Fr. Gill’s new book.¹ The author in this work of some 411 pages of text,

¹ *The Council of Florence*, by Joseph Gill (Cambridge University Press 47s 6d).

reviews at length the history of the Council of Florence. He has built upon the labours of fellow-Jesuits, especially of Fr. Georg Hofmann, who twenty years ago conceived the idea of editing the series, *Concilium Florentinum, Documenta et Scriptores*: that is, critical editions of some hitherto unpublished MSS. and of other documents already in print but inadequately edited. Fr. Gill has himself produced in this series a critical edition of the Greek Acts of the Council, the *Practica*. His new book, based as it is on a sure foundation of authentic documents, can therefore claim to be the most authoritative history of the Council yet produced, and indeed the only complete history of it that there is.

Its chronology is simple. It starts with the negotiations under Pope Martin V (1417-31), continues with those between Constantinople and Eugenius IV and Constantinople and Basel, and then recounts the story of the arrival of the Greeks in Italy, of the twenty-two public sessions and the other events of the Council, the departure for home of the Orientals and the reception in Constantinople of the Decree of Union.

The chain of events is, at first sight, straightforward enough. But it was in reality full of cross-currents, controversies, setbacks, of promising proposals that came to nothing; and it went on for wellnigh two full years. Yet at last the Decree of Union was signed by all but two of the Greeks; and, later on, union was accepted by the representatives of other Oriental Churches.

Many of the Greeks, however, on their return to Constantinople, went back on their pledges. The Latins, on their side, were not able to implement promptly their promise of help. In consequence, the schism was not healed; and it began to be said that the Greeks had signed the Degree of Union not freely but under duress—because of papal pressure and imperial threats. Fr. Gill discusses this question at length.

That the Pope deliberately and of set purpose kept the Greeks in Italy and in a state of near-famine is untrue. Admittedly Eugenius was almost from the start in arrears with his payments. He had calculated on the Council lasting for a few months and it went on for nearly two years, and long before the end of that time he was himself in sore financial straits. What money he gave them (and in the end they got all that was due to them, though tardily), he had to borrow. The result was that the Greeks were in reduced circumstances, and some, especially among the servants, the monks, and the lower-ranking officials, must have felt the pinch of want.

With regard to the imperial action, Fr. Gill quotes an illuminating remark made by the Emperor to Eugenius when the Pope was pressing him to bring the Greeks, divided in opinion, to a decision: "I am

not the master of the Greek synod, nor do I want to use my authority to force it to any statement."

To admit, however, that the Emperor, to put an end to their indecision, insisted on the prelates stating their opinions in writing needs no apology. Divided between the convincing arguments of Bessarion, Scholarius, Isidore and the rest, and their traditional sentiments in respect of the Latins confirmed by the solid stand of Eugenius, they never would have come to a decision unless recourse had been had to some such expedient.

Yet, whosoever the fault, the Council of Florence did not heal the schism. Anti-Latinism had for centuries been part of the Greek outlook. It had reached its climax after the capture of Constantinople as a result of the Fourth Crusade in 1204, and had flared up again in the Palamastic controversy among the Greeks of the mid-fourteenth century. And yet, as Fr. Gill says, on the eve of the Council the Greeks were more ready than ever before for the reunion of the Churches. That there were secondary reasons why they wanted union with the Latins does not preclude a genuine desire for Church union for its own sake. The point is that the Greeks were ready to go to Italy for the Council when they found it impossible to have it in Constantinople. In fact, they went to Italy confident that they would quickly and amicably convict the Latins of error, and return home with union achieved, leaving a grateful West ready to defend their country against the Turks. Instead, they found the Latins armed with abundant and weighty arguments. The Council dragged on for two years, mostly because of delays caused by the Greeks, in financially straitened circumstances, with success ever eluding them. Convinced finally in head, but not in heart, of Latin orthodoxy, the Greeks signed freely with their heads in Florence; and then, back in Constantinople, where they felt the full shock of traditional sentiment, they recanted with their hearts. The learned and consistently anti-unionist Mark of Ephesus was an excellent propagandist. Of the unionists, Bessarion was back in Italy, Isidore had been sent to Russia; and theirs was the more difficult task of changing, not following, a prejudice. In Constantinople, the very numerous and ill-educated monks and the populace led by them were certainly anti-unionist. Court circles were probably in favour of union from the beginning; certainly so later on. The mass of good citizens, finding no certain guidance in their divided Church, adopted a reserved and conservative attitude.

It is not surprising, then, that many people consider the Council of Florence to have been a failure. Certainly it did not achieve a lasting result in its main purpose. But it has not been ineffective—a point well made in Fr. Gill's introduction:

It is certain that the Council of Florence changed the course of history. Before it, the cry heard on all sides was "Reform in head and members" to be achieved by a General Council that as regards faith, heresy, and reform was superior to a pope. After it, though the need for reform was no less great, the demand for it was less vocal, and the definition of Florence about the primacy of the papacy had dealt a death-blow to Conciliarism.

And again:

It was the last and greatest endeavour to unite the separated Churches of East and West, an attempt conceived on a grandiose scale. It envisaged union of the Latin Church with all the Christians of the East. The fact that it lasted for such a short time does not mean that the Council has remained completely ineffective. Its Decree of Union with the Greeks abides as the definition of certain theological truths and as a norm of doctrine to guide the minds of those who hope to heal the schism yet. It has already served as such in the union with Rome of Churches of oriental rites such, for example, as the Ruthenians (1596) and the Rumanians (1700), arranged on the basis of the principles enunciated at Florence.

From the pages of this history there emerge some attractive and striking personalities:

The Emperor, John VIII: his whole life was overshadowed by the threat from the Turk and the inescapable knowledge that the Empire was crumbling. Nevertheless he was a prime mover in the Council. He showed patience and a mingling of authority and human consideration in dealing with his Greek subjects. He himself was true to the union till the end.

The Patriarch Joseph II: he was a Bulgarian by birth, of simple piety, not learned but of a sound sense and a knowledge of men. His death before the union was carried into effect was tragic, since, if he had been ruling in Constantinople when the delegates returned, he would have been a strong influence in establishing the union firmly.

Pope Eugenius IV: he was a native of Venice and had been a canon regular. All through his pontificate he lived like a religious. He was the great power behind the Council of Florence viewed both as a basis for reunion of East and West and, as we have said earlier, as a means that brought the Conciliar Movement to an end in the West.

Of the two Greek cardinals, Bessarion of Nicaea was a leading orator in the Council; and the other, Isidore of Kiev, showed his ability and courage in organising the union.

One more figure must be mentioned, and considered in greater

detail: Mark, Metropolitan of Ephesus, the great opponent of the union. The usual picture of Mark is that of the fanatical "hater of the Latins." But a recent monograph by an Orthodox priest controverts that picture,¹ that, if Mark had been such, the Emperor would not have chosen him to go to Italy for a reunion council. Mark of Ephesus was one of the last representatives of the "Palaeologian Renaissance," and a contemporary of Bessarion; for both of them sat at the feet of the philosopher Gemistus Pletho. Mark rejected Pletho's teaching early in life, and became a monk at the age of twenty-six. This fact does not in itself account for his theological convictions, since both Bessarion and Isidore were monks, and a number of abbots of noted monasteries signed the Decree of Union, Mark, then, resisted the union, not because of any dislike of the Latin West as such, but because of his own theological and mystical background, which was that of Palamism² or Hesychasm. One of his teachers, Joseph Bryennius, had been a personal disciple of Gregory Palamas. The thesis produces some evidence to suggest that behind the theological discussions at Florence there was the clash between the two schools of thought that had split the Byzantine Church into irreconcilable camps.

The Greeks opposing Mark, Bessarion, Isidore, Gregory Mammas and George of Trebizond, were in no sense adherents of "Latin" theology, nor were they "Westerners" in the cultural or political sense. They might be termed Byzantine "Scholastics;" but they derived their scholasticism not from the West, but from Byzantine soil, from their love of Hellenism. They represented what may be termed the "official" theology of the Greeks. They based their argument with the Latins on Patristic texts, and in this manner came to a formal reconciliation between the Latin and the Greek doctrines.

Such is this Orthodox thesis. It does at least suggest the importance of a deeper investigation into the theological discussions at the Council. There are hints in this direction in Fr. Gill's work; but he is concerned, in the main, with the history of the Council, which he has given us in full.

Some forty-eight years after the Council, the Blessed Angelo Leonora, a Benedictine of Vallombrosa, retired to a hermitage at Le Celle to pray for reunion. He had already composed a liturgical office for that event, "*Festum Unionis et Nuptiarum Agni*." *Fiat*.

BEDE WINSLOW

¹ See *St. Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly* (New York, 1957), Vol. I (New series), No. 1. "St. Mark of Ephesus" by Fr. Alexander Schmann.

² Cf. "The Theology of Gregory Palamas on the Divine Simplicity" by Dom Clement Lialine. *The Eastern Churches Quarterly*, Vol. VI (1946), No. 5.

REVIEWS

STUART HAMPSHIRE

Thought and Action, by Stuart Hampshire (Chatto and Windus 25s).
Augustine: Philosopher of Freedom, by Mary T. Clark, R.S.C.J. (Desclée Company \$4.50).

MR. HAMPSHIRE sets out to rescue British philosophy from its compartmentalism and its exaggerated preoccupation with linguistics. It was high time that the task was attempted by someone within the contemporary inner circle whose professional credentials are so undisputed. Whether he has adopted the best tactic for his counter revolution is a matter of opinion. The ordinary rules of exposition—not to mention the convenience of the reader—are taken lightly. Paragraphs are grudgingly bestowed on us. We run, for example, from p. 185 to p. 189 without one. But there is a haunting poetic quality about the style which clings to the memory. In spite of some irritation that a very good book has not been made even better, one is conscious always of the workings of a distinguished and original mind.

Moral philosophers in this country have recently been very coy about the practical implications of their subject. Professor Nowell-Smith drew a sharp distinction in his *Ethics* between the aims of the great moral philosophers of the past and those of their present-day successors. "From Plato, Aristotle and Epicurus," he tells us, "from Hobbes, Spinoza and Butler, you can learn how in their opinion you ought to live." But he accepts, it would seem, the limited role laid down for the moral philosopher (as distinct from the moralist) by Professor Ayer. "His concern," says the latter, "is not primarily to make moral judgments but to analyse their nature." Mr. Hampshire points the way to a much more ambitious, and I would think a much loftier enterprise for himself and his professional colleagues.

"To show," he says, "the connection between knowledge of various degrees and freedom of various degrees is the principle purpose of this book." And certainly he insists on nothing more constantly than the relationship between knowledge (more particularly self-knowledge) and moral action. "Only with knowledge comes the opportunity of choice and therefore full responsibility." Nor could any full examination of *Thought and Action* fail to linger over the very interesting treatment of "Intention."

Looking to the future, however, one is inclined to find his most significant submission elsewhere. "The only critical ethics," he concludes towards the end, "is a story of ideals of human excellence that at the same time points a way to the future of these ideals." Once that

standpoint is accepted the triviality of much contemporary ethical discussion is surely exposed. Mr. Hampshire criticises our contemporary ethicists for being satisfied with "a philosophy that aims only to describe the misunderstood features of language as a working system of habits and conventions." They fail to understand that language as it exists to-day throws a very imperfect light on Man; language being but a single social institution and expressing Man's developing nature at a single moment in time.

Mr. Hampshire points out repeatedly the grave error made so commonly and understandably in academic circles of separating the theory of knowledge from moral philosophy and both from the world of practical decisions. Too many authorities on the theory of knowledge in recent centuries have inevitably depicted Man as a spectator instead of an agent. Too many ethicists have assumed that moral injunctions are always addressed to the will and not to the critical intelligence. Mr. Hampshire finds all such approaches too sectional. He insists that practical reasoning, if pressed to its conclusions, must always end "in arguments that belong to the philosophy of mind." He is obsessed, and naturally, with the basic question—what constitutes a good man? But if I understand him aright, this question must remain insoluble except in an account of Man's complete nature. "If the idea of Man was once made firm and clear in its outlines to me it seems that every other essentially disputed notion must fall into place."

Mr. Hampshire adopts throughout a tone of inscrutable neutrality towards all forms of theism. He shows an occasional tendency to lean alarmingly far towards evolutionary ethics and to toy with the idea that moral virtue may not necessarily be higher in the scale of values than aesthetic excellence. But no praise can be too high for the seriousness and integrity and independence of his search for Truth. May he herald the dawn of an era in which Man is once again studied as a whole.

Mother Clark, of the Philosophy Faculty at Manhattanville College of the Sacred Heart, has written a book of a very different kind, but one which is also full of interest and charm. Her *Augustine: Philosopher of Freedom* is clearly a labour of love. It was hardly to be expected that imperfections would be admitted in her hero, but her acuteness is notable, her scholarship impressive, and her narrative style very attractive.

In a fine historical sweep she compares Augustine's doctrine of free will with that of Plato and Aristotle; of Plotinus, to whom she considers that his debt has been exaggerated; of Anselm, and St. Thomas Aquinas who "ratifies, develops and metaphysically justifies the Augustinian conception of freedom." A final chapter deals effectively in praise or criticism with Maritain, Blondel and Sartre among others,

with good quotations one is glad to notice from Barbara Ward's *Faith and Freedom*.

Mother Clark is well aware that St. Augustine has been accused of impairing ordinary ideas of free will. One recalls Sidgwick's references in his *History of Ethics*. Sidgwick mentions, for example, "Augustine by whom the doctrine of Man's incapacity to obey God's law by his unaided moral energy was pressed to a point at which it was difficult to reconcile it with the freedom of the will." Mother Clark will have none of this. The key distinction, she points out, in Augustine "is between human choice and human freedom (*arbitrium voluntatis* and *libertas*)." Without it "his doctrine of freedom would be incomprehensible. By ignoring or misunderstanding this distinction some have formed and propagated a distorted notion of Augustine's doctrine." What this amounts to in practice is that Fallen Man retains free will in the sense we ordinarily understand it. But Fallen Man cannot, without the help of God, concentrate on his true end owing to "an unwilling tendency towards evil." In this sense Man, while possessing free choice, is not truly free. "But as long as God is willing and free choice exists the lost freedom can be regained and the way is by prayer."

St. Augustine and Mother Clark, his interpreter, insist as strenuously as Mr. Hampshire on self-knowledge as a requisite of real freedom. Drawing, however, on insights which professional philosophers are apt to deny themselves, Mother Clark goes further and deeper and argues that "the principle feature of the will is not its independence but its love—a joyous assent to all reality and perfection." Mother Clark not only admits but insists in her closing words that "the mystery remains." But the learned Professor and the Reverend Mother have perhaps made equal progress towards that "positive light on the human will from which alone," if we are to believe Dr. Austin Farrer, "the Divine can be conjectured."

PAKENHAM

TWO MODERN COMPOSERS

Moving into Aquarius, by Michael Tippett (Routledge 18s).

Conversations with Igor Stravinsky, by Igor Stravinsky and Robert Craft (Faber 21s).

TWO DISTINGUISHED contemporary composers, one of whom is a fervent admirer of the other, might be expected to share a considerable area of preoccupation and experience, if not necessarily of opinion. Yet the most immediately striking feature of these two books, which are both autobiographical, though neither is a formal autobiography, is their utter dissimilarity—a dissimilarity which is fundamental, not a mere accident of their different genesis.

The fourteen articles and broadcast talks which Mr. Tippett has now published in book form reveal a passionate concern about the importance of the composer to contemporary society, and about the failure of communication, the "disrelation" between him and his audience. Although the intensity of feeling which gives the book its force betrays the personally involved creative artist, the cast of the thought is that of the speculative thinker, its expression that of the psychologist or sociologist.

Many of the figures who have an immense relevance to Tippett—Jung (especially), Freud, Nietzsche, Goethe, for example—would have little significance for Stravinsky. The very form he chose for his book (which consists of his answers to well-pointed questions by the American conductor, Robert Craft) suggests no sense of urgency to defend or argue the position of the artist, no burning desire to express any ideas except those which can be formed in music. Asked about Auden's description of music as "a virtual image of our experience of living as temporal," he replies, ". . . this kind of thinking about music is a different vocation altogether for me: I cannot *do* anything with it as a truth, and my mind is a *doing* one." The problem of communication does not arise: "When I compose something, I cannot conceive that it should fail to be recognised for what it is, and understood. I use the language of music, and my statement in my grammar will be clear to the musician who has followed music up to where my contemporaries and I have brought it." Indeed, music to Stravinsky is not a means of communication (he long since denied that music could communicate anything): composition is the fashioning of an object, something which is intrinsically beautiful and exists for no other purpose. The reactions of the public simply have no relevance.

Not surprisingly, therefore, Stravinsky does not share Tippett's feelings of isolation. On the contrary, he shows a justly proud awareness of his own position in an aristocracy of artists, and to him theirs is the only world which matters at all. Surely no one living can have moved in a more glittering assembly: his father's friend Dostoevsky, his teacher Rimsky-Korsakov, his colleague Diaghilev, and then the long procession of unforgettable names—Debussy, Ravel, Nijinsky, Proust, Maeterlinck, Cocteau, Eliot, Auden, Dylan Thomas, Picasso, Monet. . . . Nevertheless it is almost impossible to realise in these pages that Stravinsky is now seventy-five, for his lively though discriminating interest in the work of composers nearly half a century his junior is that of a directly concerned contemporary, not the tolerant curiosity of an old master.

The curious thing is that although Tippett's mind is in a sense very much more "literary" than Stravinsky's, he finds much greater difficulty in expressing himself. This will come as no surprise to any who

have wrestled with the convolutions of the composer's own libretto to his opera *The Midsummer Marriage*—upon which, incidentally, this book contains a useful commentary. Where Tippett is often obscure, ponderous and disconnected, Stravinsky is invariably lucid and brilliantly incisive. When he says "I lack words" it is a significant remark expressive of an attitude, but it is not a statement of fact. For example:

R.C. What does "genius" mean to you?

I.S. A "pathetic" term strictly; or, in literature, a propaganda word used by people who do not deserve rational opposition. . . . If it doesn't already appear in the *Dictionnaire des idées reçues*, it should be put there with, as its automatic responses, "Michelangelo" and "Beethoven."

R.C. What does "sincerity" mean to you?

I.S. It is a *sine qua non* that at the same time guarantees nothing.

Stravinsky never fails to command attention. However brittle or unsympathetic one may find him at least he is never dull. Tippett, on the other hand, makes even heavier demands on his reader's patience than on his brains. Yet one cannot but find his book moving, even haunting, for it reveals the utterly true and noble mind of a fine artist.

ERIC TAYLOR

A SWEDISH CLASSICIST

Roman Literary Portraits, by Einar Löfstedt (Oxford, Clarendon Press 21s).

OUTSIDE Sweden Professor Löfstedt was known in classical circles chiefly as the author of a standard work, *Syntactica*. This new book shows that the disciplined writing of the philologist, which in England inspires respect rather than affection, was happily only a narrow sector of his interests. Here are nine Roman essays of a generalised literary and historical kind. There is nothing profoundly original here to excite the classical scholar; but Löfstedt's genial and urbane humanism is attractive and infectious, and he has been very well served by his translator, Mr. P. M. Fraser of All Souls.

Though this is a collection of occasional publications, some unity is lent to the book by a preliminary chapter on the background, and also by the author's universal awareness of the central importance of rhetoric in all genres of Roman creative literature. This is especially true of his treatment of *historia*, here represented by an essay on Sallust and two on Tacitus. "Tacitus as an historian" is, however, an unsatisfactory essay. Far too much is made of the "silent and embittered subjection" of the historian under Domitian; was not Tacitus praetor

in 88, and did he not hold a select priesthood? One suspects that Syme's recent conjecture is more likely, that it was precisely the tension between personal preferment and the sufferings of the political opposition which is the psychological cause of much of his resentment. Again, this essay goes too far in denying the merits of Tacitus as scientific historian. Nothing is said of his personal research and his study of documents; indeed in the investigation of evidence he is close to modern historical standards. The other essay on the style of Tacitus is more substantial; some will have already seen the gist of it in *The Journal of Roman Studies*.

In other chapters there is a very sympathetic survey of Cicero as orator, philosopher, and rhetorician; in particular, the apologia for Cicero's philosophical achievement deserves a wide public. Very useful, too, are the comments on Cornelius Gallus, contemporary of Cicero and the founder of elegiac love-poetry at Rome. Another essay, entitled "Roman Financiers," gives a very perceptive picture of the general-gourmet Lucullus, but the account of Cicero's friend Atticus seems to be a re-hash of Boissier, and four pages on Augustus as financier allows us only to see how valuable a full-length treatment would have been.

Though the book has its areas of weakness, the author's wide knowledge of European letters and his sympathetic communion with the characters he describes makes for civilising reading. It may perhaps be worth noting that Sallust's birthplace is wrongly cited: that Mithradates' victims in Asia were Italians; and that the murder of Agrippa Postumus was not reported to Tiberius by Sallustius.

P. G. WALSH

The Modern German Novel, by H. M. Waidson (University of Hull Publications; Oxford University Press. 15s).

DR. WAIDSON'S BOOK is a survey of German prose fiction published between 1945 and 1957. Much has been done to avoid giving the impression of a mere catalogue and more important authors are allotted correspondingly longer critical commentaries, but as a result the finished product wavers a little between an exhaustive list and a critical appreciation of imaginative German prose of the post-war decade. One could wish for an even more fully critical treatment of authors who have already gained international recognition, as have Hesse, Carossa and Wiechert, even if this were to mean totally ignoring rather more minor writers of little real literary distinction.

The central types of modern German prose are classified for discussion according to thematic content. This means of classification can be misleading—one would not perhaps immediately associate Hesse

with the "idyllic ideal"—but it fairly represents the major preoccupations of important post-war German writers. There has been much pure documentation of the past as well as a nostalgia harking back to the first decades of the century. Wiechert and Carossa at least are in a sense representative of the old Goethean tradition. Thomas Mann has a chapter to himself and there is a chapter on Utopian novels, although this omits any reference to Hermann Gohde's *Der achte Tag* (written under this pseudonym by the Viennese historian Friedrich Heer), which presents at least a highly significant point of view. Surrealism and the short story are considered and there is an important chapter on Musil and Heimito von Doderer.

Probably the general reader is best served by Dr. Waidson's survey of themes and their treatment by the various authors. But his method makes it difficult to comment adequately on what is technically new and interesting or on the formal qualities of well-established authors. Sometimes he seems, for instance, to underrate the subtlety of Thomas Mann's technique; *Felix Krull* is indeed "the great German comic novel of our time," but its irony is none the less biting for that, and it is perhaps over-simple to regard that garrulous old classicist Dr. Serenus Zeitblom, Ph.D., as the author's mouthpiece in *Dr. Faustus*.

Among the younger novelists Heinrich Böll suffers perhaps most from the lack of comment on formal literary qualities, for his ability to draw characters both from the inside and the outside while retaining the traditional forms of the novel and short story is even more striking than his immense vitality. But the survey presents a very fair impression of the major themes in post-war German fiction and is a useful guide to anyone interested in contemporary European literature. Dr. Waidson writes with an informed and pleasing tolerance all the time, but he is at his best when dealing with those of his authors who are more closely linked to the great traditions of German literature.

The Two-edged Sword, by John L. Mackenzie S.J. (Chapman 24s).

A NEW WIND has been blowing through Catholic thought about the Old Testament these last twenty years and Fr. Mackenzie's book, which he subtitles "An interpretation of the Old Testament," is typical of the new approach. We are at last not merely thinking but saying openly that the Bible cannot be interpreted from within, but that every scrap of archaeological, historical, linguistic and scientific evidence must be studied with a completely open mind. So often, in their attitude to the findings of the geologist or the biologist, scripture scholars have shown signs of a nervous anxiety which does not speak well for the robustness of their faith. Now at last we seem really to believe that scientific developments can do nothing but

help our understanding of the Bible, instead of supposing that the Bible provided a ready-made strait-jacket within which the finding of other scholars must be fitted.

It is Fr. Mackenzie's great achievement that he is able to satisfy us that he really has looked the facts in the face, and can still insist on the uniqueness of the Bible. However much, for instance, we find in common between biblical accounts of creation, of primitive history, of Mosaic legislation on the one hand and, on the other, Babylonian folk-lore or the laws of Hammurabi, we can still see where and how profoundly the Hebraic contribution differs from all others.

There are times, it is true, when even Fr. Mackenzie fails to clinch his point, by a certain failure in clarity. His style is not always limpid; moreover, on occasion, he does not quite carry his argument through to its logical conclusion. But, as a whole, the book is to be welcomed as an important contribution to an important subject.

Holy Writ or Holy Church, by George H. Tavard (Burns and Oates 30s.)

THIS is an impressive and important piece of work. Whilst it deals primarily and directly with the question of the relative position of Scripture and Tradition in the mind of the Church, it casts an immense amount of light on the causes leading up to the Reformation. The Conciliar Movement has perhaps received sufficient notice already, but the role of Nominalism, that great solvent of Thomist metaphysics, is shown to have had very direct influence on the early Reformers, whilst the Humanist interest in the Bible, the New Testament in particular, tended to exaggerate the importance of Scripture as against Tradition.

When Luther came on the scene, then "the stage had been set by conciliarism, nominalism and biblicism. Yet Luther contributed his personal touch." So, of course, did Calvin, with his subtler mind. When the Fathers assembled at Trent, this was one of their major problems. How they dealt with it is the theme of the remainder of this study. The author's final summing up of the Catholic position deserves quotation. "The Book is the Word of God, and the City is the Church. The Book leads to the City. Yet the City is described in the Book. To prefer the one to the other amounts to renouncing both."

Into the making of this valuable analysis an immense mass of research has gone. At times, perhaps, the detail almost obscures the general outline. Yet we must be grateful for the painstaking way in which Fr. Tavard has handled a vast array of evidence. His book will long remain as an essential tool for scholars in this field.



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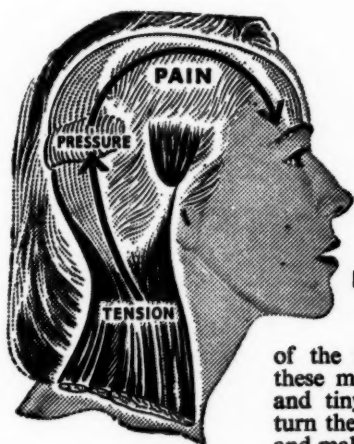


ONE of the great occupational risks of business life under the pressure of to-day is that the practical man of affairs neglects his outside reading, and all too easily falls into a narrow circle of immediate preoccupations. There is always loss in this, and the Catholic business or professional man, as a member of the Church Universal, has a particularly strong reason for keeping his mind open to wider horizons. Certainly it was never more necessary than now to follow world happenings. A direct chain of causes and effects ties every business to economical changes in the world, which are themselves as often the consequence as the cause of changes in men's political and social ideas. These ideas in their turn come out of the religions, or irreligions, of contemporary man.

In many countries the Catholic Church is at the heart of the battle of ideas. Cardinal Manning's saying that "all great quarrels between men are at bottom theological" suggests that there is, in fact, no better starting-point or background for understanding the modern world than a Catholic one. Because of this approach and background

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